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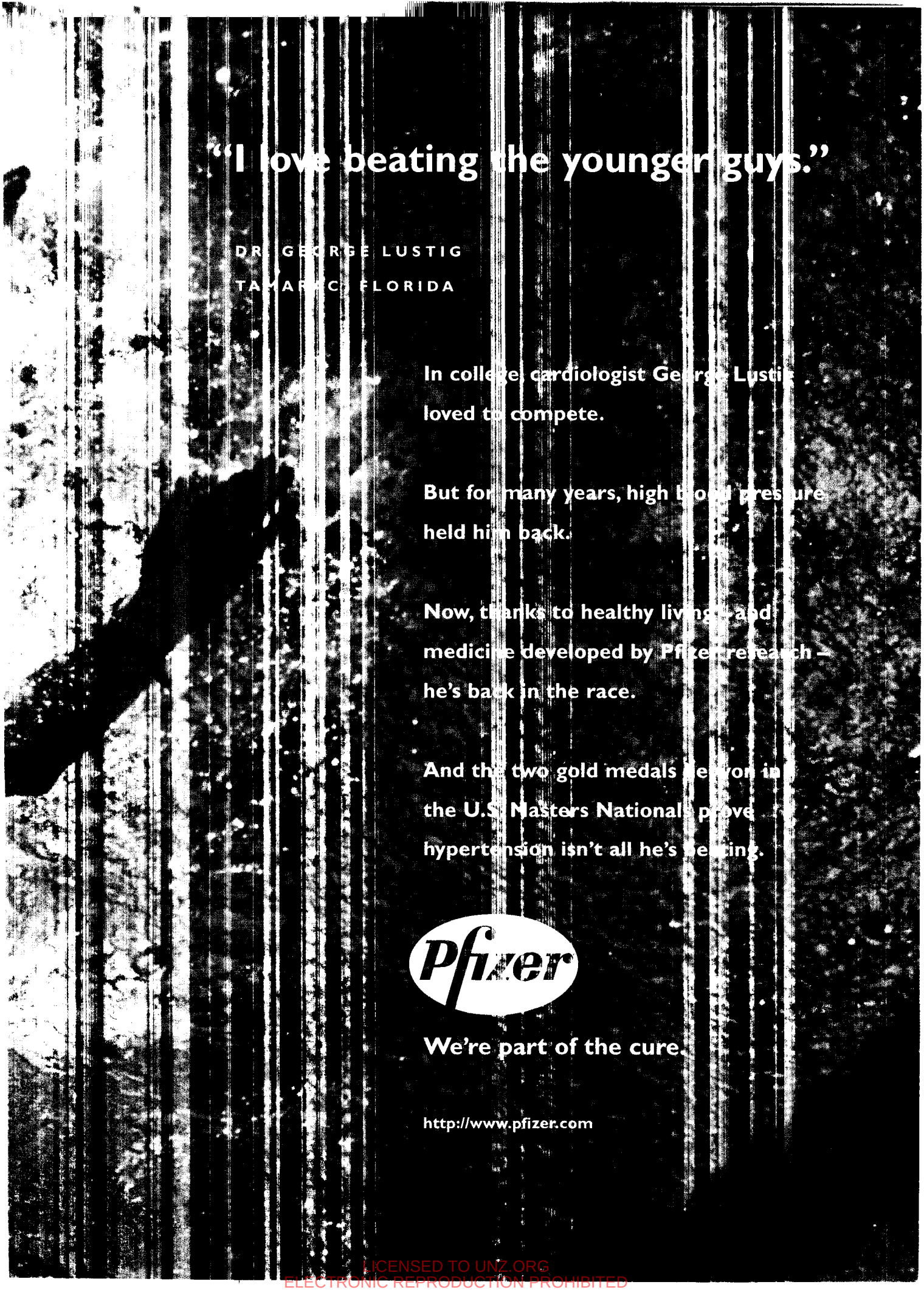
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FROM WASHINGTON

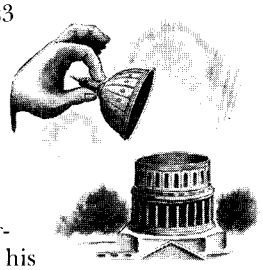
The big ten

After Bob Dole's "dramatic" tax cut, and with a big new Clinton pander looking likely any day, this seems to be the season to propose radical new (or, in Dole's supply-side case, old) schemes to "restore the American dream." So how about this one: to solve America's problems, all you have to do is move 10 percent of the nation's public and private resources from where they are now to where they're really needed. Sound like tinkering at the edges? Actually, the things you can do by "shifting" 10 percent of our $7.5 trillion national output (that's $750 billion a year) show how narrow and timid the current campaign debate really is. In rough numbers, here's a sample.

Crime. Bob Dole talks tough but offers few specifics. Bill Clinton's trying to get 100,000 new cops on the street, though with luck he'll fund half that. But, as Adam Walinsky showed in *The Atlantic Monthly* last year, restoring the police-to-violent-crime ratio of the feel-safe 1960s would mean adding not 100,000 cops, but nearly 5 *million*. This comes before the surge in the number of violence-prone 15- to 24-year-olds we'll see in the next decade. What to do? For starters, let's take back city streets, block by block, by doubling the 550,000 officers on state and local forces. Annual cost: $30 billion (or 0.4 percent of the gross domestic product).

Education. Bob Dole's $3 billion-a-year voucher plan for students stuck in bad public schools would reach 10 percent of school-age kids, tops. Bill Clinton's Goals 2000 effort, meanwhile, is mired in a backlash over who'd set curriculum standards. Toss in his recently proposed (and dubious) tax breaks for post-secondary tuition, and our latest "education president" is still shooting blanks. After a decade of angst about "a nation at risk," and K-12 performance that has our industrial competitors laughing, can't we come up with something better? If we're serious, let's extend the school year from 180 to 220 days and reduce class size (the one change teachers say would truly make a difference) from today's average of twenty-five to fifteen. Annual cost: $150 billion (2 percent of GDP).

Research and development. Despite the rhetoric, business and government have been investing only 2 percent of GDP in non-defense R&D over the past decade, compared to 3 percent in Japan and Germany. Since innovation is the key to long-term productivity growth, why not double it? Annual cost: $150 billion (2 percent of GDP).



Welfare. The new welfare bill will soon send 4 million ill-equipped moms into a job market where 7 million Americans still can't find work after four years of economic recovery. If they can't land jobs, the plan is to throw these women and their 10 million blameless kids off the rolls after two years, since no public-sector employment of last resort is guaranteed. A Works Progress Administration-style program that assures every able-bodied American work runs $50 billion (0.7 percent of GDP).

The working poor. Many economists say the growing gap between rich and poor will be tough to reverse, because the technologies transforming our economy favor higher-skilled workers. To dampen resistance to such technologies (resistance that only hurts us in the long run), while avoiding the social and political stresses new technologies bring, let's supplement blue-collar incomes with a super-Earned Income Tax Credit, and give these families health coverage so full-time work assures employees some security. Annual cost: $85 billion (1.2 percent of GDP).

Cities. Remember all the talk of a "Marshall Plan" for the cities? New Democrats find it doesn't poll well, and Republicans, Jack Kemp notwithstanding, don't really care. To rebuild our former enemies, the real Marshall Plan cost us 1.5 percent of GDP yearly. Let's do half as much (at $50 billion) for our neighbors. Throw in another 3 percent of GDP for productivity-enhancing private investment, and it's a wrap.

Here's how we'll pay for it. First, shave half a percent of GDP ($40 billion) from defense by telling the Pentagon we no longer expect it to fight and win two major wars simultaneously (Dole pal and defense hawk Pete Domenici suggested

continued on page 53

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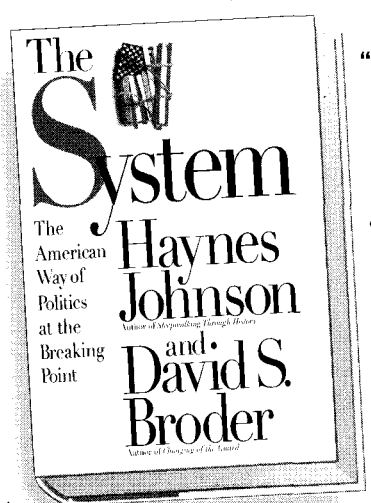

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CORRESPONDENCE

Hacks

To the editors:

Rarely am I as impressed by an article as I was by Stephen Glass's ("Taxis and the Meaning of Work," August 5). Speaking as one who reads a great many periodicals, I honestly can't remember when an article held me rapt. I have certainly never before been moved to write a letter in response to an article.

By the end of the first paragraph, I must admit, I was bored. "Great," I thought, "now it can't end until a brother robs him." I apologize if he kept Glass riding around bored in cabs waiting to fill in that slot in his outline, but something tells me this is one area in which he found our work ethic to be beyond reproach. Maybe for his next piece he can cruise Wall Street waiting to catch some white guys foisting billions of dollars in S&L losses onto all our backs. But, no, they'd be individuals, not "white guys," and poof, there went his cover piece. Thanks for the news flash that people commit only those crimes that are available to them. In any event, I thought it would end there as most articles of this type usually do. But, oh no, there was so much more. Can't complain about *his* work ethic, can we?

I predicted the traditional "hide behind old black guys to criticize young black guys" opener, I predicted the materialistic, status-conscious quotes from young brothers turning up their noses at hard labor. I'm just glad, for his sake, he didn't have to find any poor non-blacks who feel that way. Ditto the notion that we prefer drug-dealing or the dole to unglamorous work; I would have been shocked in a completely different way had Glass investigated the staggering amount of gray market enterprise in which poor blacks engage (backyard mechanics, volume babysitting, kitchen-table hair salons, etc.). I fully expected to see the immigrant and slave experiences equated and to find us compared to worthier people of color and found wanting. What I didn't see coming was the religion angle. That's when I knew I was in the presence of something special.

But why not go all the way? Why not quantify with statistics the decline in black church attendance, especially among the young? Surely Glass could have documented a rise in the number of young blacks adhering to militant cults and the like. I can't believe y'all passed up the opportunity to associate all this with Afrocentrism. Also, why were we deprived of the tale of Glass's own stalwart forebears who no doubt struggled selflessly against soul-crashing odds to make a better future for their descendants?

DEBRA DICKERSON
Arlington, Virginia

Due north

To the editors:

Charles Lane ("Canada Sly," August 5) can't seem to distinguish between two separate issues: 1) whether Canadian trade with Cuba is reprehensible and sleazy, and 2) whether we have a right to enforce our judgments on this trade by punishing foreign companies belonging to friendly nations who trade with Cuba. We are applying our law extraterritorially and imposing sanctions unilaterally as if NAFTA and GATT didn't exist. We wouldn't stand it for one minute if some nation were punishing our corporations because they dealt with China (or any other of a number of wretched dictatorships we get along with). Was our government wrong when it attacked the principle of a secondary boycott that Arab nations were trying to operate against companies doing business with Israel? Since the Canadians and Europeans are contemplating retaliation, Helms, Burton, Clinton, Lane et al. may be leading us into a trade war.

Our threats and bullying continue our unfortunate tendency to view Canada as some kind of dependent flunky of the United States. With a possible future water crisis in the West, we may one day badly need Canadian goodwill. Whatever moral "low ground" Canada may occupy because it allows its firms to deal with Cuba, our arrogant bullying and extraterritorial imposition of American law puts us on an even lower plane.

THOMAS ROBBINS
Rochester, Minnesota

Mechanical, unsatisfactory

To the editors:

Novelist Caryl Phillips's review of Kent Worcester's biography of C. L. R. James ("Mariner, Renegade and Castaway," August 5) contains an important stretch of uncreative creative writing. Phillips demonstrates the historiographic influence of James's *Black Jacobins* (1938) by vicariously linking it to one thesis of Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery*. Besides misdating the publication date of the latter book by half a decade (1944, not 1949), Phillips asserts that Williams "dealt the death-blow to any idea that there was not a strictly commercial rationale behind" the British abolition of

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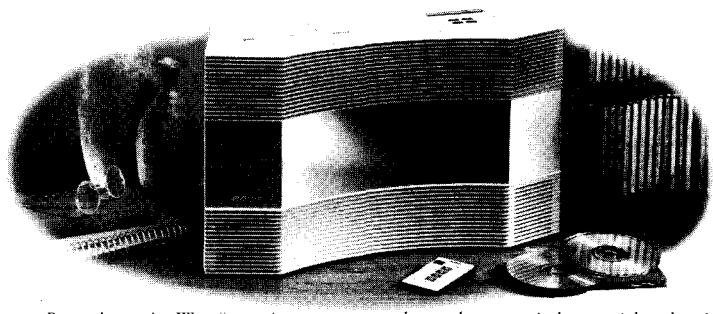

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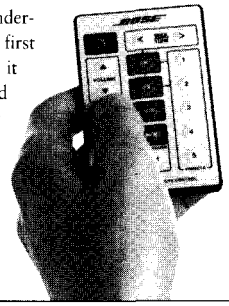

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slavery. Death-blow? For fully two decades, historians of abolition—including one very closely tied to James himself—have been routinely describing Williams's "strictly commercial" thesis as mechanical, unsatisfactory and obsolete. Why Phillips pounced upon this aside (literally a "commercial" break) in the *Black Jacobins* as its principal contribution to historiography is bewildering. What is clear is that the review did a second, and greater, disservice to that powerful book by making no mention at all of its really enduring influence on the vast new historiography of Caribbean slave resistance. The *Black Jacobins, Capitalism and Slavery* and Caribbean history could all have been better served.

SEYMOUR DRESCHER
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Bonds issue

To the editors:

Martin Peretz's "Israel Bonds" of August 5, extolling the views of the new Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, carries a seemingly gratuitous reference: "Nobody cares what George McGovern or Ramsay Clark thinks about Israel." I am not familiar with Mr. Clark's view of Israel, but I would like to comment on my own.

I have been a supporter of Israel since its creation in 1948. As a congressman, senator and a special assistant to President John Kennedy, I supported every Israel-assistance bill. As the Democratic presidential nominee in 1972, I took an unswerving position in support of Israel. As chairman of the Middle East Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I tried my best to be fair to all the Middle East states, including Israel.

The Middle East Policy Council, which I now head, maintains high standards of intellectual honesty and objectivity with reference to the interests of the United States in the Middle East. I originally joined the board of this American organization after my former Senate colleague Edmund Muskie recommended it to me. He was then a member of the board, as was former Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci, who remains a board member.

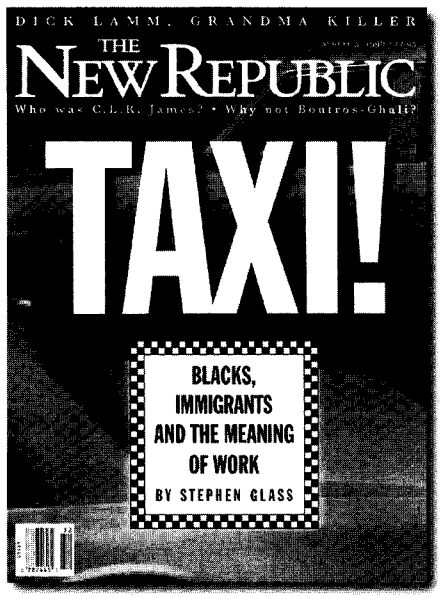
It is true that as an American patriot I have occasionally criticized policies that I thought were not in our national interest. I personally favored the election of former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres over Netanyahu. I continue to believe that Peres would have better served the interests of Israel—as well as the interests of the United States and the Arabs. That is why President Clinton, whom Peretz praises as Israel's best-ever presidential friend, openly supported Peres. That is why half the voters of Israel and most thoughtful Americans favored him.

GEORGE MCGOVERN
President, Middle East Policy Council
Washington, D.C.

Discounted

To the editors:

Richard Jenkyns makes some excellent critical points ("Down for the Count," August 5) in his review of Barbara Belford's biography of Bram Stoker about the absence of psychological drama in Stoker's *Dracula*. An over-presence of magic and the supernatural in the Count's character (if he has one), Jenkyns says, removes him too much from actual life to give him any real interest as a literary character. But it must be said in Stoker's defense (and concomitantly Belford's) that the supernatural Dracula was a night creature; unless he made it back to the castle (or his London digs) before dawn, he was finished. There lies vulnerability enough some would say, surely.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Who was C.L.R. James? • Why not Boutros-Ghali?
TAXI!
BLACKS, IMMIGRANTS AND THE MEANING OF WORK
BY STEPHEN GLASS

HARRY WILLIAMS
Washington, D.C.

Bird watching

To the editors:

Congratulations to TNR for writing a Notebook item (August 5) smearing me without bothering to check the facts. Indeed, I did object to Thomas Bird being named to head the Jewish Studies Interdisciplinary Program (not a department, as the item called it). I objected to the appointment of Bird because (1) the Jewish Studies faculty was not consulted at all about the appointment; (2) the current director, Dr. Joseph Sungulowsky, a respected scholar, with a serious record of publications in Jewish Studies, was dismissed without explanation after two years of heading the program; and (3) Bird's only claim to heading Jewish Studies was his knowledge and teaching of Yiddish, and good works on behalf of Soviet Jewry. To say that Bird's credentials were enough to serve as head of a program, a head whose duties include curriculum in Jewish Studies, who must evaluate transfer credits from other Jewish Studies settings (including yeshiva studies, which many Queens students mistakenly believe should guarantee them college credit), is to denigrate that program and through it the essence of Jewish Studies.

Still, I did not call for his resignation. Instead, as I told both the dean and the reporters who spoke to me, I simply wouldn't teach or be affiliated with the program while Bird headed it. I did not want to be part of a program that the administration seemed by its actions to hold in contempt.

And what of Bird's not being Jewish? That all other ethnic programs at Queens are headed by a member of that ethnic group is a fact of life. In part this is, I assume, an effort to provide for students and the community an opportunity to see that one can be a member of a particular ethnic group and still study it objectively and with academic rigor. Is it necessary to be a Jew to head Jewish Studies? Of course not, no more than a woman need head Women's Studies or a black person head Black Studies. Credentials are what matter. But when Jewish Studies was singled out for a head who had neither the academic credentials nor the ethnic connection, it seemed to me some objections ought to be raised.

Finally, your gratuitous smear that my own work "does not exactly glow in the dark" has the ring of intellectual McCarthyism. What exactly is your criticism? Since my work has never been reviewed in the pages of your magazine but has been almost universally praised both in academic journals and the wider press, from *The New York Times* to *The Los Angeles Times*, since my books have won the National Jewish Book Award and several others, and I am the recipient of many grants and honors, I can only assume that your writer who considers Bird an ideal candidate to head Jewish Studies is obviously not too well versed in what does glow. I suppose it is TNR that remains in the dark, and alas, chooses to stay there.

SAMUEL C. HEILMAN
Jerusalem, Israel

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ELECTION YEAR CHOICES

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The Politics and Power of the New American Majority

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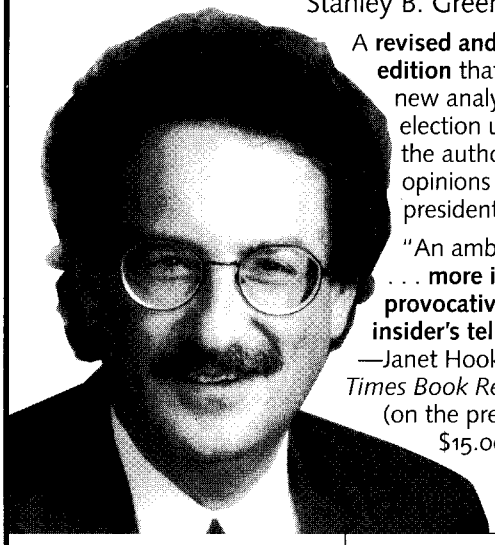

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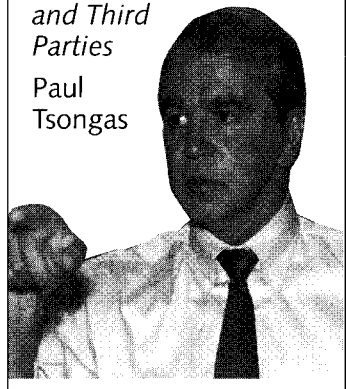

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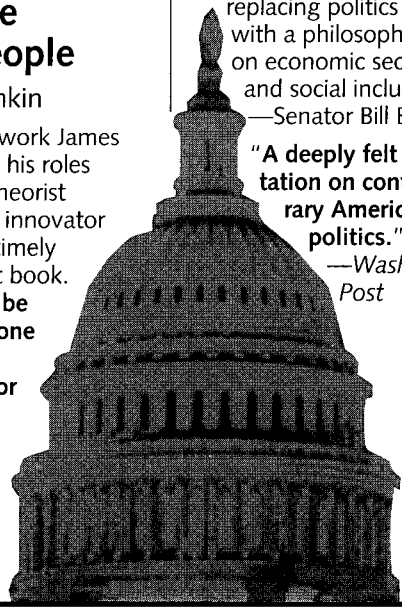

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

SEPTEMBER 9, 1996

FREE CHECHNYA

The Russian Army no longer controls Grozny. The importance of this fact cannot be overstated. In and around the Kremlin, the implications of the fall of Grozny—more precisely, the inadvertent fall of Grozny, to a mere 1,500 Chechen fighters who set out only to harass—are seismic. Even if the Russians retake the Chechen capital, as some factions in the openly feuding Yeltsin administration are trying to do, Grozny's fall heralds the collapse of whatever logic may have buttressed the Clinton administration's waffling about the bloody Russian misadventure in the Caucasus.

Since December 1994, when President Boris Yeltsin sent his armies south to conquer, the U.S., abetted by its European allies, has turned a blind eye to this neo-imperial slaughter. Too much international pressure on Yeltsin over Chechnya, it was said, would undermine the man who represented the last, best hope to preserve democracy in Russia from the Communist-nationalist onslaught. In the interest of "reform," the wasting of thousands of Chechen (and Russian) lives would, regrettably, have to be countenanced.

The election is now over. Boris Yeltsin will remain in power for the next four years or, more likely, until his next heart attack. Through his alliance with General Alexander Lebed, he has co-opted a considerable slice of the nationalist electorate. Surely a little truth-telling by the West about the Chechen mess cannot undercut the forces of "reform" now. So why does the Clinton administration blather on about "the cycle of violence," as White House spokesman Michael McCurry put it, and urge the Russians and Chechens to return to their June 10 agreement? Only last year, Bill Clinton actually compared that deal, conceived by Yeltsin as a pre-election ploy and violated once the vote was over, to Lincoln's efforts to hold the Union together. Even Lebed—and for this reason he is a significant force in Russian politics—feels no compunction about describing Russia's war as "a shame" in which Russian boys are used as "cannon fodder" for the obscure objectives of "corrupt" and incompetent generals. Lebed went so far as to laud the "military discipline and courage" of the "fine" Chechen fighters, whom Yeltsin was recently branding "bandits."

We have no illusions regarding the Chechen forces or their leader, Shamil Basayev, who, in the pursuit of national liberation, has stooped to all the usual tricks of the guerrilla trade: airplane hijackings, massive hostage takings, execution of prisoners. But the Chechen forces are not exactly bandits. Although hardly democrats, they enjoy the overwhelming support of the Chechen population, which has suffered innumerable cruelties at Moscow's hands, not just in the last twenty months but in the days of Stalin and of the tsars.

The Chechen disaster has provided one sobering lesson after another about the wisdom and competence of the Russian state. All its gambits to pacify this contentious territory have failed: covert operations, military intervention, the establishment of a puppet Chechen government, duplicitous negotiations. In a crudely realistic sense, these failures should be reassuring to the West: unable to impose their will within their own borders, the Russian armed forces can hardly be considered a short-term threat to the rest of Europe.

In a deeper sense, though, it's unsettling to contemplate the bloody-mindedness of a government, unreservedly supported by the West for its supposed commitment to reform, that continues to try to divert its people's attention from their problems by demonizing, then bludgeoning, a small and proud ethnos in its midst. "They have hungry miners they should be feeding. Why are they spending all their money destroying Chechnya?" Shamil Basayev mused to Michael Specter of *The New York Times*.

Anyway, it's not all Russia's money. A good deal of it comes from the International Monetary Fund and, by extension, from Americans. This gives the Clinton administration leverage with which to counsel the Russians, publicly and forcefully, to do what is plainly in their own interest: withdraw from Chechnya, unilaterally; give the Chechens the substance of independent statehood and then haggle about what to call it. But this president and his strategic geniuses are likely to offer up more excuses, or no excuses at all. A few months ago, it was impolitic to tell the truth about Chechnya because there was an election in Russia. Now it will be impolitic to tell the truth about Chechnya because there is an election in the United States. The truth, it appears, must await a day without politics, and in Clintonland that will be a long wait. •

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NOTEBOOK

HOT OFF THE PRESS: If someone offered you a copy of President Clinton's State of the Union address for $16.95, would you dream of buying it? The folks at Times Books seem to think so. A sneak peek at *Between Hope and History* by President Bill Clinton reveals it to be (was there any doubt?) campaign boilerplate masquerading as a book. It even has all the trappings of a book, down to the page that reads: "ALSO BY BILL CLINTON: *Putting People First* (with Al Gore)." Alternately, you might wait for the next hot publishing event: the Democratic platform. That one's free.

SOME CHOICE: Cynics claim Republican women were used by their leadership in San Diego, trotted out during prime time like so many showhorses. We're not so sexist. We think they knew exactly what they were doing. In exchange for the exposure, Susan Molinari, Kay Bailey Hutchison and all the other pro-choice women speakers agreed to avoid the touchy subject of abortion. But New Jersey Governor Christie Todd Whitman went for extra credit. In the days before the convention, while her staff blanketed New Jersey with press releases blasting the pro-life sections of the platform, she quietly kept pro-choice activists, who were trying to sway platform delegates, from distributing questionnaires in her home state. For all her public valor, "privately, she was looking for a rock to hide under," says a source close to Pete Wilson. Wilson, you may remember, refused to help silence the abortion dissent. The result: Whitman got about six speaking roles, while Wilson, Republican governor of the host state, got exactly none.

BAD TRIP: It's a good bet the Democrats assembled in Chicago this week will recall President Clinton's intervention in Haiti as his biggest foreign policy triumph. But, if the Democrats congratulate themselves on their record of defending human rights, even in poor, black nations with little history of it, we hope they'll have the taste not to do so in the company of Convention Vice-Chairwoman Carol Moseley-Braun. Braun's recent trip to Nigeria to meet with that country's thug-in-chief, General Sani Abacha, should make her a pariah among those in the party who take human rights seriously. During Braun's visit, taken with her ex-fiancé, a former lobbyist for Nigeria, she called for "engagement and cooperation" with its stupid, brutal leaders—earning her the scorn of Jesse Jackson and TransAfrica's Randall Robinson. At the GOP convention, Bob Dole said that any Republican who didn't believe people of all races deserve the same freedoms should head for the doors marked "exit." It would represent a considerable service if one of the Democratic convention speakers directed a similar comment in the direction of the junior senator from Illinois.

WE DIDN'T KNOW IT HAD LEFT:

Iowa moves back to Pittsburgh

—*The Flint Journal*, August 15, 1996.
(Thanks to Ed McKenzie of Flint, Michigan.)

LET THEM EAT CAKE: Under you-can't-say-no instructions from the International Monetary Fund, the government of Jordan has cut its subsidy for bread, one kilo of which will now sell for 26 cents instead of the 12 cents to which the population had become accustomed (other staples were similarly affected). In a country with a per capita income of $1,000, that's a recipe for misery, and it brought tens of thousands into the streets, throwing stones, burning vehicles and offices, attacking the police. The turbulence soon spread from outlying towns to Amman, and it provided the monarchy's political opposition, leftist, Islamist and Palestinian, with a chance to ride popular fury. Jordan, the one Arab country that has mortgaged its future to peace, is in danger. It is, therefore, aggravating that Israel, for all of Prime Minister Netanyahu's paeans to the free market, still imposes arbitrary restrictions and tariffs on Jordanian goods entering the West Bank. The economic stakes for Israel in preserving its old statist habits are tiny. The economic stakes for a small economy such as Jordan's are gargantuan. For both countries, the political stakes are great. Another threat to Jordan's stability is its international debt, which has fueled a decades-old liquidity crisis. America, to its credit, has forgiven Jordan its liabilities. But Japan, its largest creditor, hasn't. (Many European countries, among them many who devote considerable rhetorical attention to Arab development, also have not.) But even the United States could do more. First, it could quickly find some surplus wheat under Public Law 480 to ship to Jordan. And it could finally grant the Hashemite monarchy the access to our markets which comes from Most Favored Nation status. Bill Clinton risked political capital to secure MFN for China, a morally dubious transaction. A like privilege has also been accorded to the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza. Since these autonomous areas export exactly what Jordan exports, this artificial competitive advantage directly punishes the Jordanians. Jordan, which really treasures peace with Israel, and which really is a friend of the United States, remains outside the charmed trading circle. To whose benefit?

WAS THAT BENEDICT ARNOLD WE SAW WITH THE SNOWBLOWER? "The results [of the Reform Party balloting] were announced here late Saturday night, a few miles from the campsite where George Washington's 12,000 battered troops spent the harsh winter of 1977-78."
—*The New York Times*, Monday August 19, 1996, p. B8.

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Exploiting Asian discontent.

ANGRY YELLOW MEN

By Kenneth Lee

This past March, Bob Dole delivered his only anti-affirmative action speech of the primaries. "We ought to do away with preferences. This is America. It ought to be based on merit," he told a cheering crowd of 2,000. But his audience contained few if any angry white males. Dole was speaking in Little Saigon, in the heart of Southern California's Vietnamese-American community.

Why this audience? After all, as racial minorities, Asians benefit from affirmative action in numerous areas, such as federal contracting. Most Asian American civil rights groups, seeking alliances with more established counterparts such as the NAACP and the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, lobby hard to keep racial preferences in place. As Daphne Kwok of the Organization of Chinese Americans puts it, "We work with other minority groups because we're politically young, and there's strength in numbers."

According to a 1993 poll conducted by the California Policy Seminar, however, two-thirds of Asians oppose affirmative action. Hostility to preferences in higher education is particularly strong. In 1989, several disgruntled Asian Americans filed complaints with the federal Office of Civil Rights, accusing the University of California, Berkeley, of discriminating against Asian students. Ira M. Heyman, then Berkeley's chancellor, apologized for the rigged admissions policy and pledged to reform it. Yet a racial disparity still exists: the average Asian freshman in 1994 had an average SAT score of 1293 and a 3.9 GPA, compared to 1256 and 3.86 for whites and 3.43 and 994 for blacks. According to a poll conducted by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Asians say they have more in common with whites than with blacks or Latinos.

Take Allan Ng. Ng had an A average in high school and scored in the top 2 percent on his SATs but was rejected by several Ivy League schools. When he learned that several of his black classmates had been accepted with lower grades and test scores, he got angry. "I'm from an immigrant family, and my parents never had the opportunity to discriminate. Why should I pay for past discrimination?" he asks. Ng has become a staunch opponent of racial preferences, writing anti-affirmative action polemics for his college newspaper at the University of Virginia and distributing them through the Internet. What Ng says publicly, many Asians feel privately. When students at the University of California at Irvine held a hunger strike to protest the Board of Regents' decision to abolish racial preferences, hardly any Asians took part, although they constitute more than half of the school's population.

In this resentment, conservatives see opportunity. "There's no doubt that Republicans can run on a platform of fairness and use this issue to get the Asian vote," says Jerry Reynolds of the Center for Equal Opportunity, a conservative think tank. "Any time racial preferences are used, there's a victim. And in California, the victim often has an Asian face." The Angry Yellow Male may not have the political clout of the Angry White Male—Asians represent only 1 percent of the electorate—but Asians are America's fastest growing ethnic group; they will probably outnumber blacks by 2020. Right now they don't lean heavily toward either party. Focusing on Asians provides the GOP with indirect benefits as well, inoculating the party's anti-affirmative action crusade against charges of racism.

In California, where Asians represent 10 percent of the population, backers of this year's big affirmative action referendum, the California Civil Rights Initiative, have made special efforts to woo the Angry Yellow Male vote. The measure's supporters have deliberately showcased yellow faces in their campaign—an ironic, even cynical, use of race-conscious means to abolish race-conscious policies. The campaign has tapped prominent Asians to publicly support the initiative, such as Lester Lee, the first Chinese-American to serve as a University of California Regent. It has also appointed special liaisons to the Asian community. And it's manned an array of booths at ethnic parades and gatherings, where volunteers hand out anti-affirmative action op-ed pieces—authored, of course, by Asian Americans. In one such editorial for the paper *Heterodoxy*, Matthew Tsien, an Asian American activist, writes, "Asians do face real discrimination, but it is caused far more often by racial engineering than by white racism.... [Asians are] being turned away for university enrollment because quota requirements have been filled and room has to be made for students from other ethnic groups with dramatically lower test scores."

Such rhetoric leaves Asian civil rights groups on the defensive. "College admissions is a complex issue," says Henry Der, deputy superintendent of the California Department of Education and former director of Chinese for Affirmative Action. "Asian students have a lot of choices [in schools] even if they don't get into schools like Berkeley." Black and Latino activists tend to leave Asians out of the equation altogether, charging that an end to preferences would mean a return to "lily-white universities." But elite schools won't become all white again; they'll end up mostly white and Asian. At Berkeley, abolishing affirmative action will actually increase Asian enrollment.

Asian Americans are caught between policies that limit their admission to select colleges and opportunistic conservatives who see in them a way to further a larger social agenda. Is there a way out? One Asian student at Berkeley has a suggestion: "Maybe we should be opportunistic and use Republicans to get what we want—get rid of affirmative action." •

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BEVERLY HILLS POSTCARD

CLASS GIFT

By Edward Norden

The Grand Ballroom at the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles has hosted many a United Jewish Appeal fund-raiser. But a little while ago it hosted the flip side: a gala money-raiser and schmoozefest on behalf of the venerable American University of Beirut. The institution was once the Arab world's best simulation of a true university. To be sure, academic freedom never quite extended to subjects such as Zionism and the Koran, but the university still offered young Middle Easterners the most liberal and useful education they could get outside the West. It was a bridge between East and West, a tribute to both the WASPy idealism of the missionaries who founded it in the nineteenth century and the adaptive urges of the Levantines who enrolled.

The American University prospered in the most diverse corner of the Middle East. So long as the non-sectarian, multiconfessional, democratic fiction called Lebanon hung on, the school churned out English-speaking doctors, engineers, civilian politicians and businessmen. Its alumni include Fouad Ajami, Hanan Ashrawi, George Habash and Ray Irani, boss of Occidental Petroleum. But, when Lebanon came apart in the mid-'70s, the bridge started collapsing. The low point came in 1984, when Malcolm Kerr, an Arabist with the best credentials, was assassinated on campus soon after leaving UCLA to assume the university's presidency.

Among those at the Los Angeles conclave was Kerr's widow, Ann, not just to sell her book on her life with Malcolm, but as a member of the board of trustees of a school she still loves. The other attendees were largely alumni who reside in North America. Most were born in Lebanon, Palestine or Syria; more than half were doctors; most, though by no means all, were Christians. With pride, they sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," followed by the less-happy Lebanese national anthem, followed by the American University hymn: "From Iraq or from Arabia/From the banks so green/Of the great Egyptian river/Or from Palestine;/From the waters of Abana, Lebanon serene/We salute Thee, Alma Mater!/Oriental Queen."

The ironies were numerous. First, Lebanon isn't serene and never really was. Second, even though their country has a national anthem, most Lebanese probably wouldn't define themselves mainly by their nationality. Finally, "The Star-Spangled Banner" is the anthem of a country that the university is doing little to help get back on its feet. In fact most of these expatriates would have told you, over the hubbub and music, that the U.S. is actively slowing down AUB's resurrection.

Though it has been years since the last hostage was freed, the State Department continues to prohibit Americans from entering Lebanon. This ban deprives the university of its core of non-Arab teachers and bureaucrats. It also delays the return of American corporations that used to donate to the school. And the university's AID subsidy, which before the Lebanese civil war accounted for a quarter of its operating budget, now represents only 2 percent.

So far, AUB's most gracious benefactor has been Rafik Hariri, the Muslim prime minister of Lebanon, a patriot and a man who became rich in Saudi Arabia. But, as University President Robert Haddad told the convention, even Hariri's largesse is finite; he plans to carry those students now on scholarship until they graduate, but he won't underwrite any new ones. This shift will increasingly leave financing up to those graduates who have prospered in the New World.

Haddad taught history at Smith before accepting the AUB presidency in 1993. A Brooklyn boy whose Eastern Orthodox forebears left the Levant before the French even invented Lebanon, he's the university's first Arab-American, non-WASP head. Because the State Department bars travel to Lebanon, Haddad is an absentee administrator. He's visited the campus just twice.

Haddad realizes his school's problems aren't all foreign. Though he begins his talk to the alumni by blaming the Israelis for worsening the civil war that brought so many of them to the U.S., he admits it was basically a Lebanese affair.

He wants the Israelis to leave, the sooner the better, so the reconstruction of Lebanon as a sovereign state can move forward. In this, Haddad spoke for almost everyone at the Beverly Hilton. Next, he counsels, the Syrians who have been occupying approximately half the country since 1989 should go, too—though not as hastily. Even an optimist like him isn't sure that the various Lebanese factions won't go at it again if Hafez al-Assad withdraws his soldiers. The arrival of these soldiers, Haddad says, is what permitted the university to reopen, and their presence has been comforting.

But Haddad needn't worry that the Lebanese will be left to face their demons alone. Benjamin Netanyahu wants to extricate the Israeli army from its Lebanese quagmire. Assad, however, isn't going to make it easy for him. There are going to be Israeli troops in the south—and Syrian troops in Beirut, Tripoli, the Bekaa Valley and Sidon—just as long as there is no peace between Jerusalem and Damascus. Right now, that looks to be a long time.

The line from Damascus is that Netanyahu's election could mean war, not between the proxy Hezbollah and the Israelis but head-on between the Israelis and Syri-

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ans, and not on the Golan Heights but in Lebanon as in 1982. Such a conflict could easily render the efforts of those assembled in Beverly Hills moot. But few of the naturalized émigrés at the banquet seemed worried. Pledge cards and envelopes were distributed, and one generous alumnus, behaving for all the world as if this were a United Jewish Appeal fund-raiser after all, rose to give $100,000 to the College Hall reconstruction fund. The California wine flowed and the Dark Eyes band played French and Arabic tunes late into the night.

EDWARD NORDEN writes frequently on the Middle East.

Film criticism in decline.

THUMBS DOWN

By Josh Young

This summer's John Travolta film, *Phenomenon*, says Bonnie Churchill of the National News Syndicate, is "The Must-See Movie of the Year!" This accolade should not be confused with her praise for *Jack*, which she says is "The Best Movie You'll See." Churchill is symbolic of the death of criticism as an integral part of filmmaking. She is one of the bottom-feeder reviewers who traffic in soundbites and receive, in return, equal billing with the Schwarzeneggers and Stallones on newspaper and TV ads that reach millions of people. Churchill and her fellow dial-a-quoters fax their ad-ready exclamations in paragraph form to the marketing departments of Hollywood studios with permission to quote liberally. A summer sampler: *Multiplicity*, Ron Brewington of the American Urban Radio Networks says, is "A brilliant comedy!"; Leo Quinones of KIIS-FM exalts, "Forget four stars! *Multiplicity* gets sixteen stars!"; and Paul Wunder of WBAI Radio declares *Kingpin* is "Outrageously funny! The two geniuses responsible for *Dumb and Dumber* have outdone themselves." One studio publicist said her staff sometimes even writes the blurbs first. Then she phones a blurbist, called a "quote whore" by Hollywood studios, and asks to use his or her name.

Film reviewing now has an entirely different character than it did in the Golden Age of criticism in the 1950s. The growing influence of TV, the explosion of ancillary markets such as home video, and the public's shrinking attention span have all diminished the impact of serious criticism. Today, Hollywood sees a review as a building block in a film's marketing campaign, or as a way to attract the attention of Oscar voters. Advertising spending is now a more accurate gauge of box office earnings than critical acclaim, as returns from this summer's films show. Movies panned for having paper-thin characters and preposterous plots routinely become smashes: *Independence Day* is heading for $300 million, *Twister* has grossed more than $225 million, and *The Nutty Professor* has brought in more than $100 million.

Once a part of the artistic process, reviewing is now just one form of cheap bait. Studios know they can bypass legitimate critics with a blitz of prime-time TV spots, tie-ins with fast-food chains and stars' appearances on morning and late-night talk shows. Take *Independence Day*, which falls into the "review-proof" category, because the buzz created by the ad campaign obliterated negative reviews. Grant Fleming, a student, stood in line for the 4 a.m. showing at the Uptown Theater in Washington on opening day. "This is the most hyped movie of all time, and I have to see it even if it isn't any good," Fleming told me.

In the 1950s, reviewers came to hold influence over the types of films being made. A coterie of French iconoclasts, led by François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer and Jacques Rivette, railed against filmmakers in the film journal *Cahiers du Cinema* for not fully realizing the visual possibilities of the medium. And they had plans. "All of us at *Cahiers* thought of ourselves as future directors," Godard once explained. "Writing was already a way of making films. We were thinking cinema, and, at a certain moment, we felt that need to extend that thought." By 1959 they had changed the medium forever by creating the fabled *nouvelle vague*, which marked the advent of the auteur.

No longer, though, do critics study films as a stepping-stone to entering the craft, with intentions of improving its output. The reign of the intellectual-as-director began to end in the late '60s, around the time Peter Bogdanovich made his first film. But critics still held sway in the industry for a while. In the '70s, directors listened to Pauline Kael of *The New Yorker* because she situated the films she reviewed within a larger social context, and often stung directors personally. Like Godard and Truffaut, though with a different modus operandi, Kael sought influence in Hollywood and found it when Warren Beatty hired her.

Into the '80s critics still mattered; the independent film movement of that decade owes a debt to Vincent Canby, then *The New York Times* film critic. Canby, who wrote about even the most obscure movies, would praise a provocative film in his review and then continue to write about it in subsequent weeks in his weekly Film View column. Most critics now fit into two broad categories: those bent on soundbiting their way to fame and fortune and those who piously or sarcastically judge the work of filmmakers with impunity. Sure, there are still a few film scholars who write intelligently about cinema and pay attention to the unique qualities of the medium—Andrew Sarris, now of *The*

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New York Observer, for one—but they are an anachronism. Today's preeminent print critics—Janet Maslin of *The New York Times*, Terrence Rafferty of *The New Yorker*, David Ansen of *Newsweek*, to name a few—are read and respected by many filmmakers and moviegoers, but their impact on the big picture is virtually non-existent.

Film criticism today is increasingly dominated by a handful of TV entertainers, such as Joel Siegel of ABC's "Good Morning America" and Gene Shalit of NBC's "Today," who have become more famous than most filmmakers. More people at the suburban Multiplex can identify Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert than Jonathan Demme. Leonard Maltin reportedly earns nearly $1 million a year from his "Entertainment Tonight" gig and sales of his home video guide, a business that employs twelve writer/researchers. Generously doling out thumbs-ups and four-star ratings, they, along with the Churchill-style adjective-peddlers, render serious critics irrelevant for the studios' purposes.

To be fair, critics have changed the destiny of certain films. Typically, these are low-budget, high-quality flicks that use positive reviews as free advertising or art films searching for a niche audience that the hometown critic can deliver. *Hoop Dreams*, the basketball documentary originally intended for PBS, became a cause célèbre for Ebert, who actively campaigned for the film on the air and in print. This helped the film's distributor, Fine Line Features, build awareness of the three-hour documentary, hardly an easy sell to the Multiplex crowds. Other critics piled on, people started seeing the film, word-of-mouth took hold. (In general, art films use fewer Churchill-type quotations, because their audiences typically know one critic from another. There's also less quoting out of context, since upsetting a powerful publication can come to haunt an art-film distributor.)

Still, studios act with near impunity in lifting and rewriting quotations. Earlier this year, in *Esquire*, I wrote about *Bottle Rocket*: "This smart, untainted caper captures something honest about this generation in much the same way that *Diner*, *Saturday Night Fever* and *Easy Rider* did for their devotees." A Columbia Pictures publicist called an editor at *Esquire* and asked permission to use the quotation in an ad. (A loose protocol requires studios to clear quotations from essays or feature pieces, but not from reviews.) She mentioned that the passage was slightly edited. The new version read, "*Bottle Rocket* is a defining film for a new generation, as fresh and original and relevant for all of us today as *Diner*, *Saturday Night Fever* and *Easy Rider* were for their generations." The context issue aside, the editor pointed out that, of twenty-five words (not including film titles), four were the same. Neither version was quoted in the ads. These days, you have to savor small victories.

JOSH YOUNG writes about film for *Esquire* and other publications.

MOSTAR POSTCARD

RUN FOR YOUR LIVES

By Samantha Power

Milan Jovicic hardly fit the part of the town rebel. Wearing dark navy, orange-seamed Levis, a sweat-stained oxford and mesh loafers, he shuffled nervously along a dark corridor of the Hotel Ero, the European Union headquarters where he was seeking sanctuary. This 5'5" grandfather-widower had not been easy to find. In the last month, after receiving threats of "liquidation," he had forsaken his career and home, sprinted from Croat thugs through the back alleys of this ethnically divided town and sequestered himself in the Ero under the unlikely pseudonym "Captain Desmond Hogan." When I hailed him in the lobby, Jovicic jumped sky-high with fright and hightailed it around the nearest bend.

Before this summer, Jovicic, a Serb, had lived—and kept his head down—in the cleansed part of Mostar that is controlled by nationalist Croats and ridden with gangs. Fanatically apolitical, he stunned friends when he proclaimed it his "moral duty" to become the only candidate in the Croat-held half of Mostar to join a Muslim-led coalition in Bosnia's first postwar election, which was held on June 30.

In the eyes of the local Croats, who hoped to keep Mostar riven into two ethnically pure halves, Jovicic committed three unpardonable sins: he sought to reunite the city; he earned a seat on the City Council when his United Mostar coalition emerged victorious; and then, most egregiously, he had the nerve to honor his duty as the council's oldest member by convening Bosnia's first democratically elected "joint institution." By terrorizing Jovicic, the Croats hoped both to torpedo the ethnically mixed council—which represents everything they waged war to sabotage—and to send a stinging signal to those who expect Bosnia's September country-wide elections to kick-start the process of reintegration.

Mostar's right-wing Croat leaders are part of a large, potent camp of nationalists and opportunists who hope to sweep the September 14 poll and speed the path to Bosnia's three-way partition. Close to 28,000 candidates are scheduled to vie across Bosnia-Herzegovina for slots in an array of institutions mapped out in last November's Dayton Peace Agreement—including more than 100 municipal councils, a triethnic parliament and a three-person presidency. If the monoethnic ruling parties dominate the vote, as expected, these multiethnic bodies will, like the Mostar council, be consigned to paralysis at best and to non-existence at worst. In a testa-

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The poll also showed that a substantial number of Americans (20%) simply want immigration halted completely. In other words, **one American in five wants no immigration at all.**

We urge Congress, with the vigorous support of President Clinton, to enact legislation that would drastically reduce the present level of immigration, and thus bring our immigration policy into line with the clearly expressed wishes of the overwhelming majority of the American people.

Illegal Immigration - Out of Control

Polls have shown for years that, almost unanimously, Americans want illegal immigration stopped. Despite that, our Federal Government has done very little to reduce illegal immigration, much less stop it. An estimated 350,000 illegal aliens settle here permanently each year. **That is over three times more than the 100,000 a year a majority of Americans favor for total immigration.** These illegal settlers join a pool of an estimated **five to six million** illegal aliens who are already living here permanently in violation of our laws.

The Roper poll cited above showed that 74% of Americans (three out of every four) want illegal aliens identified and deported. So why is our government not doing just that? In 1994 only about 40,000 illegal aliens were deported. A vastly increased program of deportations would not only deter prospective illegal migrants abroad, but also motivate those already here to leave voluntarily.

The Central Issue – Overpopulation

NPG urges a drastic reduction in immigration solely because of its contribution to the disastrous growth of our U.S. population. We are on the path from our present population of 265 million to a population of nearly 500 million by 2100. **More than 90% of that growth will be the direct result of post-2000 immigration.**

Immigration is the driving force behind the population growth that is devastating our environment and the quality of our lives. **Primarily because of immigration we are rushing at breakneck speed toward an environmental and economic disaster.**

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Other things being equal, **our population size determines our impact on our already over-stressed environment and increasingly scarce resources. The size of our population is, therefore, a vitally important national issue.**

If we are to have any hope at all of creating an economy that will be sustainable indefinitely, in a sound and healthy environment, with an adequate standard of living for all, we need a smaller, not a larger, U.S. population. **But we will never be able to achieve a smaller population unless we reduce immigration to a small fraction of its present level. That is a simple fact.**

Isn't there someone among our political leaders who is willing to recognize the need for a smaller U.S.population and for public policies to achieve it? He or she would have the support of a majority of Americans. The Roper poll cited above showed that 54% of Americans believe that our country is already overpopulated.

NPG is a nonprofit, national membership organization established in 1972. Contributions to NPG are tax deductible to the extent the law allows.

Yes, I want to become a member of NPG, and help you work towards a smaller U.S. population. I am enclosing my check for annual membership dues.

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ment to the Serb ruling party's ulterior aims, its candidate for the Bosnian presidency, Momcilo Krajisnik, wants to situate the federal institutions in tents along the boundary between the Serb entity and the Muslim-Croat Federation.

Not only are the impending elections legitimizing wartime ethnic cleansing; they're precipitating peacetime violence and "electoral cleansing." As campaigning heats up, stonings, snipings and beatings have become daily events. Earlier this month, two Danish soldiers on a morning jog came upon a Muslim man dying in a ditch with broken ribs and severed thumbs; he had tried to visit his home in Serb territory. Serb police produced another Muslim man with ten broken ribs on his left side, six on his right side and a quart of blood in his chest. The police chief claimed the victim's wounds had been "self-inflicted" when he jumped from the window of his home. A United Nations police inspection revealed that the man's window was three feet off the ground.

Bosnian Serb opposition party rallies have been disrupted by power outages, rent-a-mobs and, at one recent event, a bomb. When a Muslim candidate was scheduled to appear on Bosnian Serb television, as election rules entitled him, the screen went blank for fourteen minutes and then began playing music videos. Biljana Plavsic, the current Bosnian Serb president, claims the ruling party has done no wrong. "The opposition hold rallies freely, they work without hindrance, and the fact that they have been stoned in some places is no fault of ours," she says.

Although campaign references to former Serb leader and indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic have been deemed illegal, his cheery countenance is nonetheless plastered throughout Serb territory on posters—campaign posters, that is, not the "wanted" variety. Meanwhile Krajisnik, the Bosnian Serb presidential candidate, greets audiences "in my own name and in the name of the man who much more than myself deserves your support."

The Bosnian government authorities have seen what works. They have been obstructing the launching of a new $11 million independent TV station and resorting to terror tactics against the opposition that would make their Serb enemies proud.

Further, each side has been exploiting a loophole in the electoral rules to suit its own ends, calculating that the ballot will succeed where the bullet failed. Bosnia's displaced persons will be allowed to vote in one of two places: where they lived before the war, in 1991, or where they're living now. Serb and Croat leaders are pressing their displaced constituents to register according to their current homes, in the hope of thwarting any revival of a multiethnic Bosnia; they've even denied humanitarian aid and housing to the displaced unless they go along with this resegregating strategy and change their residences. The tactic has worked, as more than 240,000 Serbs have made the switch, essentially turning their backs on their former homes. On state radio, announcers can now boast that the outcome they engineered was really an expression of the people's will. "None of the [Serb] refugees expressed a wish to vote in the Muslim-Croat entity, proving once again that any living together is impossible," one broadcast said.

Bosnian leaders have adopted the opposite approach—the one intended by Dayton's sponsors—and have urged their displaced to stake a claim to their old homes, now in Serb or Croat hands, by voting according to their 1991 residences. More than half a million Muslims have done so. The September election will thus, in all likelihood, create a welter of Bosnian municipal governments-in-exile, which the international community will be pressured to support. But, since the NATO troops implementing the Dayton plan have done little to ease the return of displaced persons, it's doubtful they'll do any more for displaced elected representatives. The likely result: widespread civil unrest among disillusioned voters and would-be assemblymen.

More troubling in the short term, many Muslim displaced persons didn't register in time to vote by absentee ballot. This means that, on election day, more than a quarter of a million Muslims may try to travel into hostile territory to vote in person. Officials of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which is supervising the elections, are considering moving polling stations closer to the border separating the entities, since in Bosnia it's easier to bring the mountain to the man than the man to the mountain.

Although an infrared identification technique will be used to cut down on double voting, eliminating one source of fraud, another obstacle to an honest vote looms. An estimated 100,000 deceased people remain on the voter registration rolls. Amid the logistical chaos of election day, outsiders may fraudulently assume the voting credentials of the deceased. One election supervisor took solace: "At the end, we can say that we have made sure that even the dead—if they come to vote—will do so only once."

Still, the Clinton administration is barreling ahead with the elections, turning a blind eye toward the electoral farce and feeding doubt about whether it ever really intended to reintegrate Bosnia at all. "Without elections," Secretary of State Warren Christopher wrote recently, "there will be no unified Bosnian state ... and little hope for greater cooperation among Bosnia's diverse communities." These elections, though, will yield no unified Bosnian state and little hope for cooperation among Bosnia's homogeneous communities. In Mostar, while the nationalist Croats line up backers for next month's vote, Milan Jovicic is busy pleading for political asylum in Switzerland. Unfortunately for those Bosnians who remain committed to multiethnicity and reintegration, Switzerland is only so big.

SAMANTHA POWER is a political analyst for the International Crisis Group, which is monitoring the implementation of the Dayton Agreement. She has covered the war in Bosnia as a journalist since 1993.

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Some Food for Thought

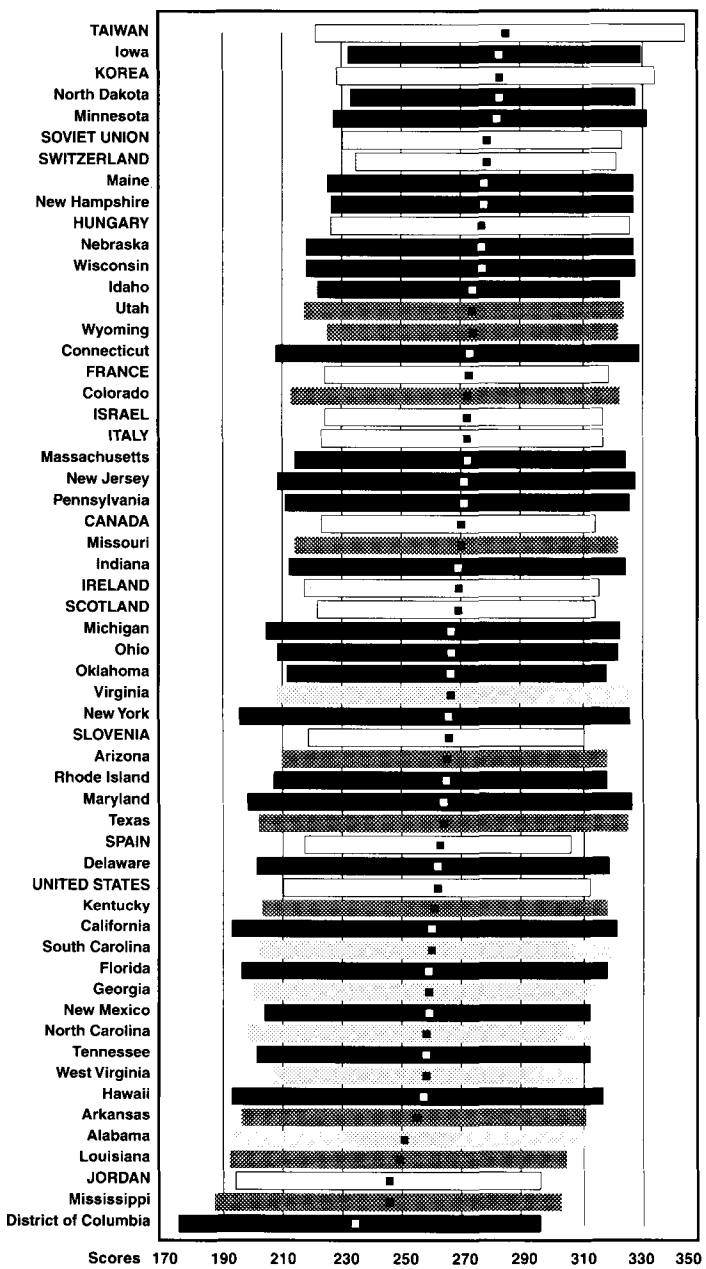
Are teacher unions the cause of poor student achievement? You don't have to look very far these days to find an editorial writer or TV commentator who will answer this question with a resounding *yes*, and now Bob Dole is getting into the act. The people who make this claim don't explain why most of the countries with successful school systems—like Japan, Germany, and France—also have strong teacher unions. Nor do they offer proof that U.S. students taught by nonunion teachers are more successful than those taught by teachers who are union members. Is there any?

Here's a simple test. If unions pull down student achievement, states where teachers are not allowed to bargain collectively should do much better than states where teachers have a legal right to do so. The chart shown ranks the math achievement of 13-year-olds in a number of industrialized countries and 41 states. It also indicates which are collective bargaining states (with black bars), which prohibit collective bargaining (light gray bars), and which give no legal support for collective bargaining but where it exists in some localities (medium gray bars). This chart should give people who connect unions with poor student achievement some food for thought.

At first glance, the chart tells a familiar and dismal story. Average math scores for U.S. eighth-graders are lower than those for youngsters from any other large country. But there is also some extremely encouraging news: Students in some states do as well as youngsters from top-scoring countries. The average scores for Iowa and North Dakota, for example, are the same as Korea's (283). Maine and New Hampshire are slightly higher than Hungary. And, yes, all four of these are collective bargaining states. Furthermore, if you look at the chart as a whole, you see that states where teachers have a right to bargain collectively occupy most of the spots in the top third—and states where collective bargaining enjoys no legal support or where it is prohibited are bunched in the bottom third. Students from states with strong teacher unions are obviously not being held down. The evidence points in the other direction.

Does this prove that collective bargaining leads to higher student achievement? I wouldn't go that far, but it's certainly clear that people who want to make unions the goat in poor student achievement had better rethink their case.

Mathematics proficiency scores for 13-year-olds in countries (1991) and public school eighth-grade students (1992), with collective bargaining data for states



Bars show range of test scores between 5th and 95th percentiles.
Possible test scores range from 0 to 500. Small squares indicate average scores.
Shading on bars shows status of collective bargaining:
States where teachers have right to bargain collectively
States that prohibit collective bargaining
States with no legal support for collective bargaining and where it exists in some localities
Sources: National Science Foundation/NCES. Data about collective bargaining: AFT.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1996 by Albert Shanker.

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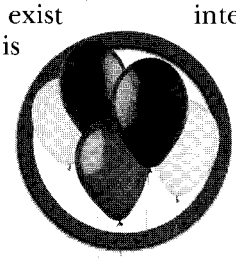
Is Bill Clinton Forrest Gump?

BIRTHDAY BOY

By David Samuels

Beneath the warm copper vault of Radio City Music Hall, where my grandmother took me once to see the Rockettes and where the president of the United States will celebrate his fiftieth birthday with Jon Bon Jovi, Aretha Franklin, Kenny Rogers and several thousand paying guests in just under an hour, it is pleasant to sit back and wonder for a moment about the relative importance of history and pop in American life. While presidents come and go, dance crazes live on forever, along with Charlie Chaplin twirling his cane, John Wayne riding horseback and Marilyn Monroe singing a breathless "Happy Birthday" to JFK in Madison Square Garden. Where history tells us stories about beginnings and ends, pop offers a fairy-tale universe where Cary Grant and Madonna exist forever outside of the time. Lyndon Johnson is remembered as part of history. JFK is pop.



As Whoopi Goldberg begins her opening monologue—"Good evening, I'm Colin Powell"—the audience leafs through the programs. Despite the president's celebrity, the list of entertainers is not as impressive as it might have been: the hundreds of empty seats attest to the inconvenience of having the presidential birthday deep in August, when most entertainment community members are on hiatus at their summer homes. Tina Turner is performing in France. Bonnie Raitt is entertaining out-of-town guests. Carol Burnett is hosting a party for her daughter. Yet this will not prevent Bill Clinton, the guests in the hall and the thousands watching via satellite at eighty sites around the country from enjoying music and testimonials to the president and to the "last half of the century that made him."

The mission of producer Jeff Margolick and his scriptwriters tonight is to identify Bill Clinton with postwar America, not as it might appear in the histories of the left or the right—wars in Korea and Vietnam, civil rights and other revolutions at home—but as it exists in the comforting and timeless world of popular nostalgia. As a giant movie screen descends, the disembodied deep bass of James Earl Jones fills the hall, introducing the year 1946—when a "loaf of bread is just a dime," Bill Clinton is born, and "President Truman extends a helping hand" to Europe—just as he might on the Discovery Channel. The clip is followed by Tony Bennett, who sings "America the Beautiful" and "The Best Is Yet to Come," and tributes from actors Lou Diamond Phillips and Nathan Lane. The screen descends again to introduce the '50s, when "Nat King Cole tops the charts," "television becomes a part of the American way of life," and "Bill Clinton, then in the third grade in Hot Springs, Arkansas, receives a C in conduct for raising his hand too often" in class. In a scene straight out of "This is Your Life," the president's third-grade teacher walks on stage to tell the audience of her long correspondence with the president and the thrill of meeting Whoopi Goldberg backstage.

What follows is a lavish preview of what New Year's Eve might look like for baby-boomers in the year 2020 at the Sands Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. As the audience wiggles its shoulders to the beat, Jon Bon Jovi, once the poodle-haired king of summer evening make-out sessions on the Jersey shore, does his best impersonation of a '50s rock star with slicked back hair and a sharp tan suit. Next up are the '60s, "a tumultuous decade when students begin protesting" and "the movie *Psycho* keeps us out of the showers." Clinton's "first set of wheels is a 1960 Buick, and he cruises the streets of Hot Springs imitating Elvis Presley."

By this point in the evening, the problem the scriptwriters face has become obvious: if the history they put on screen is generically bland enough to make the producers of Time-Life documentaries cringe, the uneasy relation of Bill Clinton to his actual—and more interesting—past leaves them little choice. Martin Luther King in Birmingham would remind conservatives of the president's support for affirmative action and liberals of his recent welfare bill signing. The Vietnam War would bring up the question of why Bill Clinton was studying in England instead of fighting in Vietnam and remind others of the young man who wrote a letter to his draft board explaining his desire to "maintain my future viability within the political system." Women's rights would trigger associations to Hillary, and, as for flower power and be-ins and hippies cavorting on acid at Woodstock, well, it's easy to see why Elvis and *Psycho* captured the scriptwriters' attention.

The decade's featured entertainer, Smokey Robinson, no doubt also seemed like a safe bet. As he looks down at the First Family to sing "The Tracks of My Tears," the familiar standard is transformed into an unintentional succession of double-entendres about the president's marriage: "If you see me with another girl/looking like I'm having fun/Although she may be cute/She's just a substitute/Because you're the permanent one." Maya Angelou follows by reading a truly awful propaganda poem by Langston Hughes, updating the spirit of the Popular Front of the '30s for multiculturalist tastes. Aretha Franklin, her hair barely visible above the confectionery ruffles of her dress, sings a downbeat "Bridge Over Troubled Water" while the horn-rimmed Young Democrat in front of me, unconcerned for the moment about his own viability within the political system, puts a discrete hand up the dress of his date.

Absent the divisiveness of the '60s, the '70s are easier to handle. Instead of "You're So Vain," her ode to

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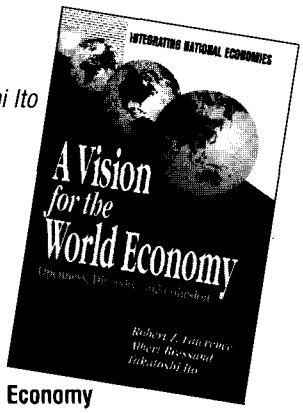

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James Taylor and celebrity narcissism, Carly Simon sings "Let the River Run." Rosie O'Donnell recites a decade's worth of television commercials word-for-word, then spots a familiar face in the audience. "The psychic guy from channel 43," she says. "You're on at 12:30 in the morning." Near the front of the stage, the psychic guy stands up and takes a bow, confirming the strange equality of presidents and public-access personalities alike in the brave new world of televised celebrity.

The '80s feature First Friends Mary Steenburgen and Ted Danson and country singer Kenny Rogers leading the audience in a sing-along of "Lean on Me." The '90s offer tapes of Quincy Jones talking and Stevie Wonder singing, and country singer Shania Twain appears live on stage to unveil a new song, "Nobody Needs to Know," carrying forward the evening's subterranean theme of deceit.

The highlight of the '90s is a medley of film clips of Clinton's greatest accomplishments in office: the peace treaty between the PLO and Israel, the rise in housing starts, the Family Leave Act, the Brady Bill and the restoration of democracy to Haiti. Pictures flash by of the president signing bills with a flourish of his pen and looking resolutely into the camera. Yet to see the president praised as the man responsible for housing starts or Middle East peace is like watching Tom Cruise saluted at the Academy Awards for a drop in the price of popcorn. In part, this is because the things for which Clinton takes credit now are so different from the things he promised four years ago.

As Bill Clinton appears on stage to thank his guests and to remember—this is New York, after all—good friends Ron Brown and Yitzhak Rabin, twenty men and women rise from the $500 seats up front and begin to protest. The protesters seem to have stepped out of a leftover film clip from the '60s section of the evening, as they blow whistles and shout "Shame! Shame! Shame!" at the welfare bill signing. "You're killing us!" a young woman in a short black dress shouts as she is dragged up the aisle and out of the hall. "Treat them gently," the president says. "In four years," he adds, "they'll come back to me and say, 'You did the right thing on that bill.'" Now the other, more beneficial side of the celebrity politics Bill Clinton has mastered becomes apparent: the president is gracious and poised, strong but compassionate. He will hear the other side but remain determined to do what needs to be done. That Clinton's presidency has not been like this at all is beside the point. In a country divided by history and hostile to politicians, Bill Clinton has moved beyond history and politics to a place where appearance triumphs over action. Perhaps one day a young, idealistic leader will rise up from nowhere and put a stop to the corporate-sponsored Hollywood image-making that has turned our democratic system into telegenic mush. Until that day comes, however ...

All hail the president of pop!

DAVID SAMUELS is a contributing editor at *Harper's*.

A keynoter unlike his legendary dad.

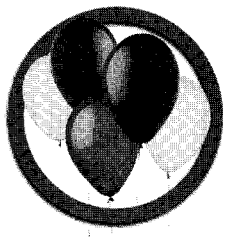
BETTER BAYH

By Michael Tackett

Which Midwestern governor talks like this?

> Taxpayers are tired of spending more to accomplish less. Workers and business are frustrated by mindless regulation that kills jobs and stifles growth. Families resent government without morality, indifferent to their values, unwilling to reward right and punish wrong.

And this:



> We have fought higher taxes ... we have worked to instill the traditional virtues—personal responsibility, hard work and compassion—in the policies that we pursue.

And this:

> So, while Washington struggles, we forge ahead. And, if the federal government wants to give more responsibility to the states, I say to Washington: "Give us the money, and get out of the way."

Michigan's John Engler? Wisconsin's Tommy Thompson? Wrong. It's Evan Bayh, the 40-year-old Democrat from Indiana who came to Bill Clinton's attention when he usurped from him the title of America's youngest governor. The political ruling class—shakers of the campaign money tree, handlers, news media consultants—already know him well. But his debut in the American living room comes this week when he delivers the keynote address to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

The White House chose Bayh because he gives rich voice to the New Democrat rhetoric the Clintonites are hoping will deliver their man a second term. And, unlike the president, Bayh governs the way he talks. It is Bayh, not self-promoters Engler or Thompson, who has reduced welfare caseloads by the largest percentage in any state. In 1988, while George Bush and Dan Quayle cruised to a landslide in the Hoosier State, Bayh won the governorship by painting his opponent, the well-funded and popular lieutenant governor, as a tax-and-spender. In 1992, as Bush and Quayle romped again, Bayh won a second term with 62 percent of the vote. Even the libertarian Cato Institute praises him as "a fiscally conservative Democrat in his record, not just his rhetoric." Bayh is the responsible younger brother Bill Clinton never had.

In 1998, Bayh intends to challenge Dan Coats, a dar-

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ling of social conservatives, for the Senate seat once held by Birch Bayh, Evan's father. If he wins, you'll start hearing his name bandied as a potential presidential candidate in 2000. But such a victory would also be fraught with irony.

Birch Bayh, a stalwart New Deal liberal, built, through his fierce defense of the labor movement, a blue-collar political constituency centered on Indiana's large automobile-parts factories. In 1980, however, Bayh fell victim to the Reagan earthquake, losing to an up-and-coming congressman named Dan Quayle. When the early 1980s brought recession to Indiana, thousands of the jobs that sustained its middle class disappeared, and Bayh's old-style Democratic base was destroyed.

These seismic political shifts were not lost on the younger Bayh, who since his race for Indiana Secretary of State in 1986 has studiously cultivated an image as a Democrat dedicated, above all, to fiscal restraint. As governor, Bayh has never raised taxes and now presides over a $1.6 billion budget surplus. For good measure, this year he signed Indiana's biggest tax cut ever.

Thanks to a waiver from the Clinton administration, Bayh has instituted a welfare program that limits benefits to two years, requires work, denies additional money to women who bear more children and bans those who are found to have abused the system from future aid. Last year, these reforms saved the state $17 million, and the number of families on welfare dropped 22 percent. To complete the trifecta of New Democrat toughness, Bayh boasts of how many prisons he's built and advocates mandatory sentences for juveniles convicted of violent crimes. He's been particularly successful in selling his law-and-order image to women, cracking down on deadbeat fathers and demanding that men take responsibility for the babies they help make.

On television, Bayh's earnest manner and cover boy looks can mask his cautious persona. He lacks the dive-into-any-crowd warmth that comes so naturally to Clinton. Although warmed by his wife, Susan, a lawyer with the ebullience of a cheerleader, and last fall by the birth of twin sons, Bayh still strikes Hoosiers as remarkably stiff. "He is very buttoned," says Dan Evans, an Indianapolis lawyer prominent in state Republican politics, "buttoned up and buttoned down ... a robot." But, if Bayh lacks the president's emotional touch and intellectual heft, he has demonstrated far more discipline. For years, while other governors panted in front of the Washington news media, Bayh, not wanting to be seen as overly ambitious, avoided a national profile. Still, he got to know the people who mattered: prominent Democratic fund-raisers. His always-on-a-first-date manners won over party socialites such as Pamela Harriman, who held a fund-raiser for him in her Georgetown home in 1988. These contacts have kept him well-funded in all his races to date.

Observers attribute Bayh's ever-formal style to his late mother, Marvella, a perfectionist who many in Indiana considered the best politician in the family. (She once turned down Lyndon Johnson's request that she run the Democratic National Committee.) Marvella died of complications from breast cancer at age 46 in 1979. "The death of his mother was the single most difficult time of his life," says Joseph Hogsett, Bayh's chief-of-staff.

With his anti-government rhetoric ("We have rejected the ways of Washington—the rancor, the partisanship, the ineffectiveness, the waste") Bayh has earned the moniker "Republicrat." It's precisely this image that led the Clinton White House to tap him for prime time. "I think he was asked because he had a very clear idea of where the party is and needs to go, and he has a track record on a state level that will show the American people that his policies have been successful in the very heart of America, a state where Republicans outnumber Democrats and conservative and moderate viewpoints are predominant," says Hogsett.

Democratic consultant Frank Greer, a longtime Clinton adviser, puts a finer point on it: "He's the future of the Democratic Party." Adds another party adviser: "He is ... attractive, persuasive, charismatic and compelling.... I guarantee you he would be an ... attractive presidential candidate in the year 2000." That campaign, too, starts in Chicago.

MICHAEL TACKETT is national political writer for *The Chicago Tribune.*

The Democrats' public brawler.

IN DODD WE TRUST

By David Lightman

Christopher J. Dodd never wanted to be Senate Democratic leader. A poor detail man, he had avoided the small, time-consuming favors and aggravations that Bob Dole and Robert Byrd endured to rise as Senate bosses. In the fall of 1994, though, the old bulls of the Senate, supporters of the fallen Jim Sasser of Tennessee (who had eyed the post) and friends of Dodd's father, the late Senator Thomas J. Dodd, shuddered at the idea of boyish Tom Daschle and his South Dakota twang taking on the wily Dole and the ever-quotable Newt Gingrich. Dodd agreed to run for the post and, in the days after the 1994 election, stayed in his office, making call after call to fellow senators. Each day, he heard Republicans bashing Democrats on TV, gloating with unseemly fervor, while his party-mates remained silent and embarrassed.

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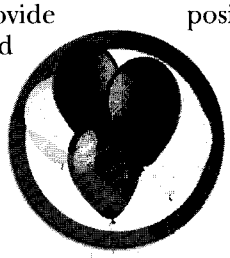
Nine days after the Democratic debacle, Dodd summoned reporters to the Senate Radio-Television Gallery. "I'm Chris Dodd, and I'm a Democrat. I know you haven't seen many of us lately," he proclaimed. The party would be back, he insisted, as long as it remembered the November 8 vote was "a mandate for change ... not a mandate for extremism." Dodd lost the leadership race by one vote—that of Ben Nighthorse Campbell, who then became a Republican—but he won Bill Clinton's heart.

Despite some differences in ideology, Clinton and Dodd forged a bond. Both men are gregarious and make friends easily, and both are diehard partisans. Impressed by Dodd's refusal to mope in public, Clinton asked him to become Democratic National Committee party chairman and pound away in defense of the battered Democrats. Dodd agreed to take the job through the 1996 election.

In his capacity as the party's public voice—Donald Fowler, the Democrats' national chairman, oversees the party machinery—Dodd has, this election season, become one of the most familiar Democratic faces in the political fray. He went to San Diego to provide counter-spin to the Republican convention, and he's a fixture on the Sunday morning talk shows. As a strategist, he's tried to keep the White House, Congress and other disparate Democratic elements working together, particularly during the fights over the budget and Medicare.



In the conference room of Dodd's Senate office, a giant illuminated portrait of his father looms. A Nuremberg prosecutor and tough anti-communist, Thomas Dodd ended his Senate career in shame after his 1967 censure for misusing campaign funds. He finished a distant third in his 1970 re-election bid and died four months after leaving office. Chris Dodd was 26 when his father was defeated. Having worked on the campaign, the son drove back to the family's Old Lyme, Connecticut, home on election night, upset he had let his father down. Yet the father, who knew for years what was coming, was not depressed. "He poured a glass of Dewar's Scotch," recalled Chris, "and thanked me for putting in the time."

Dodd has learned in his own career as well that once political labels stick they're hard to remove. Long targeted as a fight-to-the-finish liberal, he still believes in a large federal role in guaranteeing a safety net for the poor and fighting discrimination. Though Dodd has broken with liberal orthodoxy, notably with his early support of the mid-'80s Gramm-Rudman-Hollings plan to mandate a balanced budget, his image as a "big-government liberal," as his Republican counterpart Haley Barbour calls him, has proved hard to crack. Dodd remains Senator Edward Kennedy's close friend and collaborator on social issues. Dodd, in fact, often seems more Kennedyesque than Kennedy, always immaculately coiffed and dressed, speaking with his New England flair, delivering quotable quips that sting but never insult.

Yet Dodd represents a Connecticut brand of politics different from the Bay State culture of the Kennedys. In Connecticut, practical politics usually carries the day over ideology. "Rarely," says Dodd, "has an officerholder been involved in a race in our state that was excessively partisan." The state's liberal congressman Sam Gejdenson staunchly defends the Seawolf submarine built there, while its Fairfield Republican representative, Christopher Shays, supported Colin Powell for president when GOP leaders were uniting behind Dole. Dodd carried this get-along pragmatism into the Senate. "I've been in forty states as chairman," he says, "and I've never gone after the Republican senator in the state I'm in." He teamed with GOP Senator Pete Domenici in the 1994 crime bill to help local agencies slash red tape to implement government-backed programs. Republicans Dan Coats and Christopher Bond co-sponsored his parental-leave bill.

In 1992, when the Connecticut economy was weak and Dodd foresaw re-election trouble after his vote against the Persian Gulf War, he might have considered deathbed conversions to more politically advantageous positions. But Dodd ran candidly on his record, pointing out that his advocacy helped save the Seawolf and touting his parental-leave initiative. After winning by a 3-to-2 margin, he returned to Washington, sat in a Senate anteroom and reflected. He talked about how he wanted to emulate his colleagues Paul Sarbanes of Maryland and Jim Sasser, respected insiders, committee chairmen who wrote important legislation, known for more than soundbite partisanship. But, when duty called, Dodd put his bid for a more lasting legacy on hold.

Dodd knows the pitfalls of public attention. In 1983 fellow Democrats attacked him for his dovish views on Central America, and he got burned. "You yourself can become the issue," he said at the time, "and I did." Now, Dodd has again become the nation's most visible symbol of Democratic orthodoxy, as he blasts GOP vice presidential nominee Jack Kemp as having "extreme" positions and derides the GOP convention's "illusion of inclusion."

Twenty-five years ago, another 50-ish senator, a product of his own home state who could work with others to get things done, was plucked by his president to be party chairman. The press loved his quotes, and ever since he's been known for his partisan bite and bile. That's why, last week, Bob Dole had to redefine himself for the American public. Dole's stature as an insider got him the Republican nomination; his public persona could cost him the presidency. Dodd insists he has no such grand ambitions. "If I had some subplot," he says, "I probably couldn't do this job as well." But he's astute enough to know that his chairmanship chits could someday serve him well and that his combative liberal persona could doom him.

DAVID LIGHTMAN is Washington bureau chief of *The Hartford Courant.*

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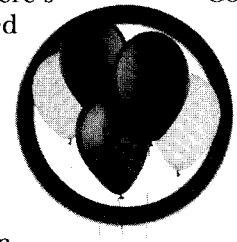
Harry and Linda Thomason return with a bang.

THE ARKANSAS IMPRESARIOS

By Matthew Cooper

For the better part of ten days, I had been trying to reach Harry Thomason and Linda Bloodworth-Thomason, the Hollywood friends of the Clintons. I had a sense that they would be back in the news. Both were, after all, working on the Democratic convention. Fairly or not, they were bound to be portrayed in the press as the Democratic Deavers—ethically challenged media impresarios.

I tried to visit them at their offices, housed in one of the tidier buildings on the Studio City lot in Los Angeles. Their office has the shabby gentility of most Hollywood offices. There are the obligatory posters from past productions. The Thomasons have a framed picture of the cast of "Designing Women," their CBS hit. There's the tip of the hat to movies they love: framed movie posters from *The Grapes of Wrath* and from a campy flick called *I'm from Arkansas*. And, this being Hollywood, there's the obligatory political reference. In this case, it's a framed copy of *Soviet Life* magazine, the old communist answer to *Life*. On the cover is Samantha Smith, the little girl who befriended Mikhail Gorbachev. I wonder: Where else but Hollywood would anyone put this on their wall? I don't think about it for long. Their assistant tells me that they're not here.



The Thomasons are busy these days, but they've gone underground. They're at the epicenter of the Travelgate affair, a fact which makes their involvement in the Clinton coronation seem, to some, a bit outrageous. "If nothing else, it's just poor taste to have someone with a checkered past running a national convention," says William Clinger, the Pennsylvania congressman who is Harry's chief GOP accuser.

Whatever the ethics, the division of labor in the Thomason household is clear: Harry is helping to produce the show at the United Center in Chicago, coordinating everything from lighting to videos to music. Linda, the greater talent as a filmmaker, is shooting the sequel to "The Man from Hope," the fourteen-minute Clinton biographical film from the 1992 convention.

It's not surprising that the Clintons have reached out to the Thomasons again. Aside from Jim and Diane Blair, the charming Arkansas lawyer-academic couple who gave Hillary her start in commodities trading, there is probably no other couple with whom the Clintons feel so close. It was, after all, the Thomasons who gave Clinton's brother, Roger, a job a few years after he got out of prison. It was the Thomasons who served as their ambassadors to Hollywood in 1991 when the Clintons were thought of as hicks. And they brought Hollywood to Washington for 1993's Harry-produced inaugural. The Thomasons even introduced the Clintons to Cristophe, he of the tarmac haircut. Moreover, the Thomasons share the same sensibilities as the Clintons—sensibilities that make them at once admirable and infuriating.

The foursome will come together in Chicago for a show that will make San Diego's hyper-choreographed Republican convention look like an improv troupe. Convention coordination is being run by Harold Ickes in the White House. But it is Harry Thomason, along with staffers from the Democratic National Committee, who is putting the campaign's broad themes into concrete action. Each night of the convention calls for a high concept. On Monday night, the theme is the impact the administration has had on real people, so Harry is rounding up the videos of regular folk who will testify about how the Clinton administration has improved their lives. On the second night come still more families. The emphasis will be on policy issues such as Clinton's college scholarship plan and his agreement with broadcasters to use the V-chip. The third night will offer speeches contrasting Dole's vision and Clinton's—attack night. Finally, Thursday night is Clinton's speech, which, though still a work in progress, will likely contain, aides say, a bevy of boasts from the past four years and policy initiatives for the next four. Viewers' most lasting impression will probably come from Linda's treacly film.

For the Thomasons, the journey to the convention began fifteen years ago when they were introduced to Clinton by Harry Thomason's brother. The couples hit it off. The Thomasons were Southerners of Bill's ilk, liberals who loved their home while hating its racism. Harry and Bill were self-styled good ol' boys who had married tough women from a higher social class. Harry hailed from tiny Hampton, Arkansas. Linda came from Poplar Bluff in Missouri's Dixified boot heel. Like Bill's family, Linda's bore tragedy's imprint. Her father fell to

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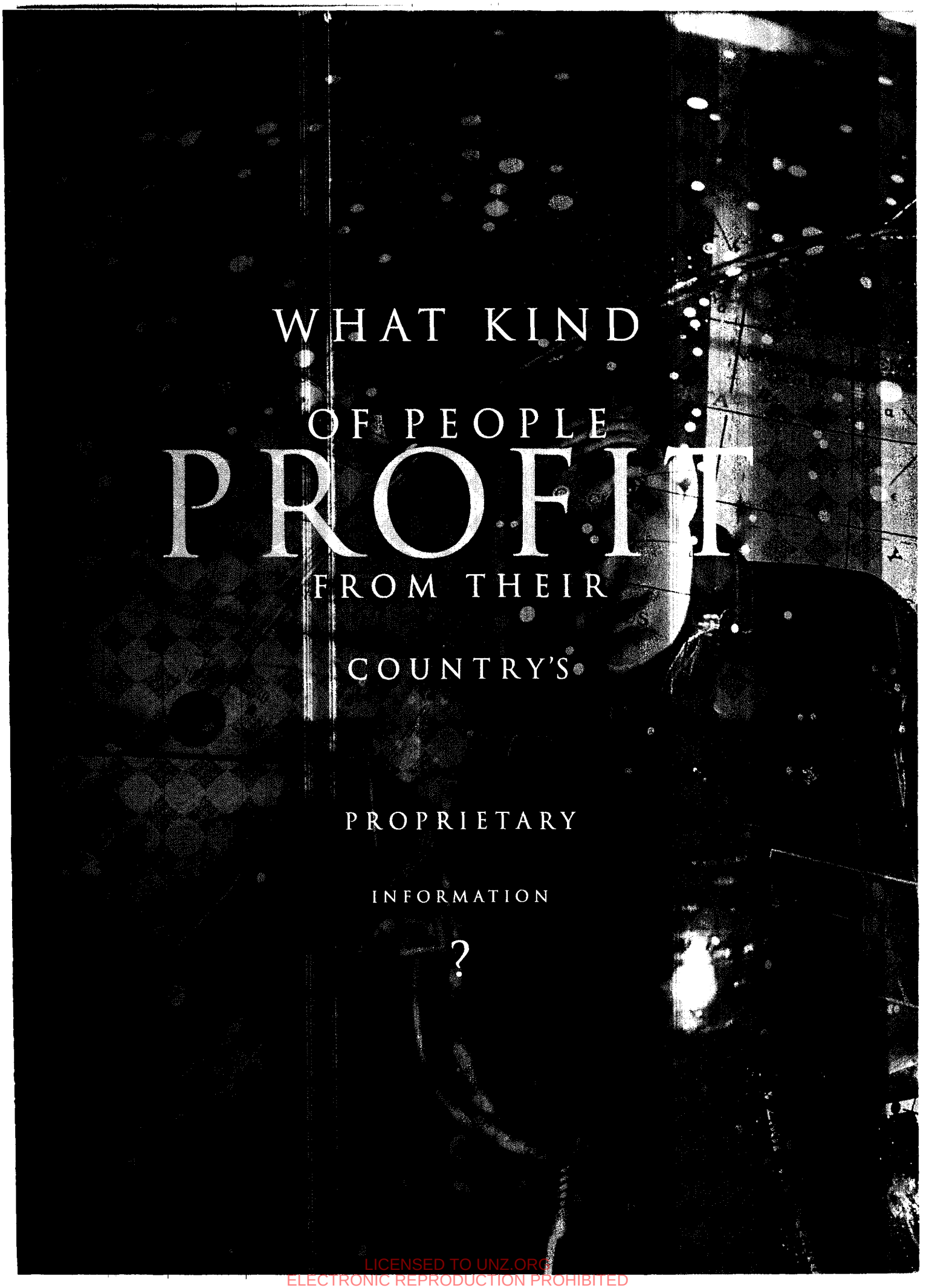

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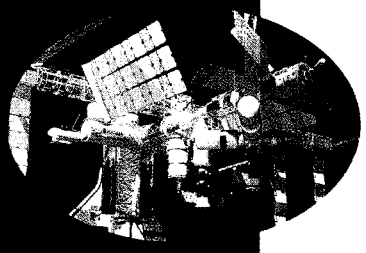
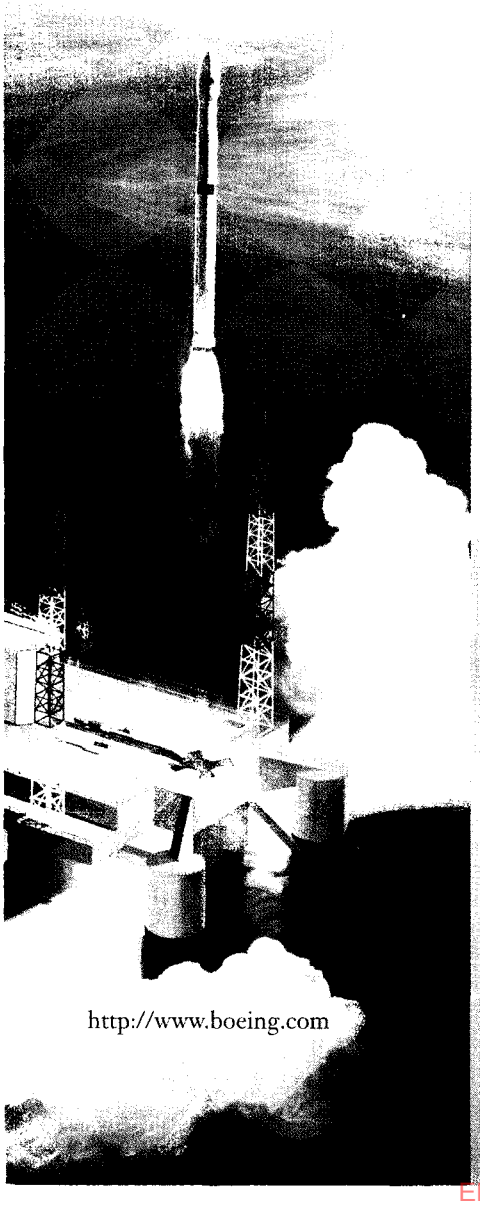


Right now, countries from around the world are working together to build a home in space, deliver satellites into orbit and protect our peace.



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There are challenges too great for one country to overcome. There are opportunities so important they must be shared. Today, America, Russia and eleven other countries are working together to build the International Space Station. Companies from Norway, Ukraine, Russia and the U.S. are developing an affordable launch system to deliver critical satellites into orbit. And NATO, Saudi Arabia, Japan and America are cooperating across borders in using an airborne warning system to increase security around the globe. These accomplishments prove that we can use technology to make a better world. But more importantly, they prove that we can work together.

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ALL KINDS.

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cancer; her mother contracted AIDS from a transfusion.

Harry and Linda met each other in L.A. in 1979. She worked as a school teacher in Watts. "I'm no longer a bleeding-heart liberal—just a brokenhearted one," Linda wrote in a moving *Los Angeles Times* piece after the riots in 1992. Serendipitously, though, the teacher became a screenwriter for "M*A*S*H*." The two encountered each other on the Columbia lot and began courting. The breakthrough for the Thomasons was "Designing Women." The show was, in a sense, the best of the Thomasons and, in some sense, the Clintons, too. The show revolved around successful Atlanta fashion designers. It was an idyllic New South where Southern womanhood was vaguely feminist. While racism was ignored in Mayberry, it was dealt with up-front and comically in "Designing Women." The cast's sole male was a black ex-con. It was the South of the Clintons at their best, bighearted and progressive. Indeed, the foursome thought of themselves in the way Linda thought of those "Designing Women": liberal yet down-home; sophisticated yet unpretentious.

HARRY AND LINDA THOMASON BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The Thomasons' career continued to soar during the 1990s. A $50 million multi-series deal with CBS made them among the hottest producers in television. Their second Southern series, "Evening Shade," won critical and commercial success. The rise of the Clintons made them more important fixtures in Hollywood, even if they were somewhat reclusive, with homes near Santa Barbara and Encino, not Beverly Hills. "They don't go to Morton's, they don't do the scene," says one Hollywood politico. "But they had the contacts."

When the Clintons took office, the Thomasons started to have problems. Their efforts at expressly political TV series faltered. First came "Hearts Afire," set in a congressional office and featuring Roger's singing. Despite radical surgery, the show died. An even bigger bomb was Linda's "Women of the House," about a woman whose congressman husband dies and who inherits his seat. While "Designing Women" offered a subtle feminism, a cheeky liberalism, these other shows were too preachy, like Bill or Hillary at their moralizing worst. Suddenly, the Thomasons seemed less golden. Currently, they have no show on a major network. Ironically, the Thomasons find themselves, indirectly, partners with Pat Robertson. The religious broadcaster's International Family Entertainment acquired MTM Entertainment in 1993, a key collaborator on the Thomasons' "Evening Shade." Through complex arrangements, the Clintons' best friends find themselves linked to one of the president's most ferocious critics.

Worse than their flops were their legal woes. The Thomasons found themselves in the middle of Travelgate. You could argue that it was Harry who basically started the whole thing when he approached Hillary and Bill to report trouble in the travel office. This he'd learned from his partner, Darnell Martens, with whom he ran an air charter business. Thomason seems not to have done anything illegal. "We've been told by the independent counsel's office that Harry Thomason is neither the target nor the subject of any criminal investigation," says Thomason's lawyer, Bob Bennett, who is Clinton's lawyer on the Paula Jones affair. Still, if there'd been no Harry complaining about the travel office, perhaps there would have been no firings and, thus, no Travelgate.

The interesting question, though, is not what Thomason did but why he did it. Whatever compelled Thomason to get involved in the White House Travel Office is slightly incomprehensible. He didn't need the money and didn't stand to make much. For whatever reason, he felt a need to meddle, to crusade, à la Clinton, and that is what got him in such hot water. Defenders of the Thomasons say that Harry was just trying to be helpful. Other friends attribute it to a streak of self-righteousness they share with the Clintons.

Although they're gone from the broadcast networks, the Thomasons have a big future. They've signed with Steven Spielberg's Dreamworks. But, when it comes to politics, they're battered. Four years ago, they were the hot couple, staging an extravaganza for the other hot couple. This time, the four of them are badly bruised. •

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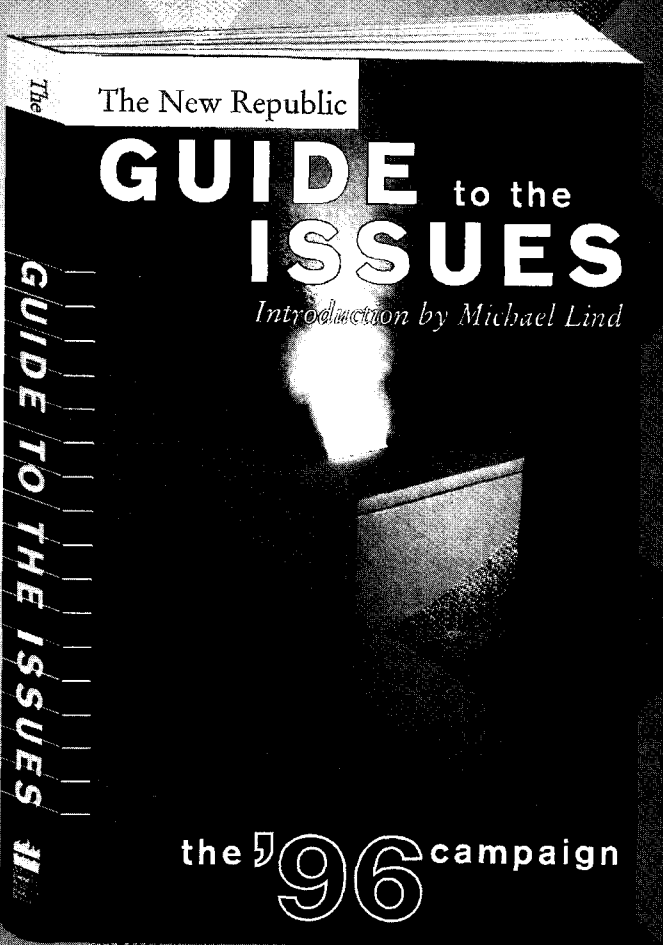

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HOWARD'S END

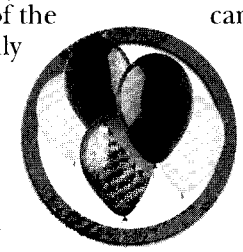
By Michael Lewis

"Great men are people who are willing to make asses of themselves in public."
—U.S. Taxpayers Party Founder Howard Phillips

August 15:

Last night at the Republican convention, they played a video featuring Alan Keyes and Ralph Reed expressing solidarity with Bob Dole and the party. Keyes was loudly cheered and Reed was ignored, a reaction that pretty well reflects their respective influence in the hearts of evangelicals.

When I finally track down Alan Keyes, however, I discover he's blind with rage. It turns out he made the video to express his views on abortion; the Republican National Committee edited out any mention of the issue. The Dole campaign and the RNC actually lied to him, says Keyes, by saying they'd either include his pro-life message or not air the video at all. "They showed it without my approval," he shouts at me, as we sit on a remote bench to avoid the autograph hounds who chase Keyes wherever he goes. "They showed it against my wishes." This is in keeping with the party's strategy of grafting a pro-choice TV show onto a pro-life platform.



"They want the life issue to be off the table," Keyes says, "but it is not off the table. If this party will not carry the pro-life message we'll start another party." Another party? "Howard Phillips has got the Taxpayers Party on forty ballots," he says. "It will soon be a very nice, very viable party." Nearby, a lone adoring fan gasps and claps. At Buchanan rallies, the mere mention of the Taxpayers Party brings the crowd to its feet. The Taxpayers Party gives hope and solace to pro-lifers. It's what they think of first when they think of what they can do to destroy the Republican Party.

August 17:

In the short drive across the thin and steeply arched bridge between San Diego and Coronado, I trace the path that a few days ago many had hoped Buchanan would follow on his way out of the Republican Party. From the top of the bridge you can see both the white tent-like San Diego Convention Center and the antique turrets of the Hotel del Coronado, where on Sunday before the Republican convention Howard Phillips sat holding his breath. Phillips created the Taxpayers Party four years ago, more or less as a vehicle for Pat Buchanan. Had Buchanan crossed the bridge, several thousand journalists would have crossed with him; the event would have overshadowed everything at the Republican convention. The unhappy coalition of economic and social conservatives would have splintered. Dole would have been finished.

It never happened, of course. Instead, the road to Coronado Island became the road to Escondido, where Buchanan last Sunday proclaimed his commitment to the Republican Party. "My friends, this party is not just their party," he said to the thousand or so people who came in hopes he would stick a plastic explosive on the side of the Dole campaign. "It's our party, too." What that means for the Taxpayers Party I am not quite sure. If Buchanan had chosen not to run, Phillips told me just a month ago, the fallback plan was for Phillips himself to be the candidate. To hold Buchanan's place for four more years, as it were.

Upon entering the Hotel del Coronado I am immediately assaulted by a middle-aged man streaked with grime. His long black toenails curl over the ends of his sandals. His chest is plastered over with soiled buttons: "CHARLES E. COLLINS FOR PRESIDENT." He is not alone. The courtyard of the distinguished old hotel teems with passionately devoted followers of Charles E. Collins, all of whom emit terrific noises and even more terrific odors. Something has gone badly wrong.

Collins is a Florida businessman who finished seventeenth in the New Hampshire primary. Ever since, his stinky brigades have been roaming the country in search of a party. Most of them believe the decline of America began with the U.N. conspiracy to fluoridate the water supply. Fluoride destroys brain cells and makes America weak, they argue. Thus, they refuse to bathe. Now they are massing together, waving signs and cheering loudly and generally disrupting life at San Diego's oldest hotel.

As I marvel at the difference between what is and what might have been, I spot K.B. Forbes. Not long after the California primary K.B. left a prominent job in the Buchanan campaign to work for Phillips. A lot of people—me, included—took the move as a sign that

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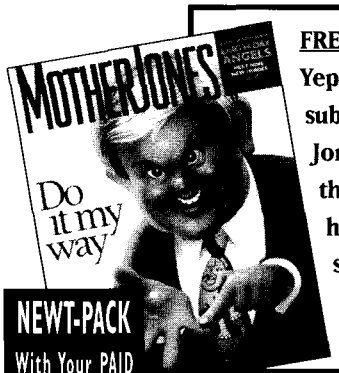

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Buchanan was about to jump. Just a month ago I shared a hamburger with K.B. and Phillips and listened to them explain how Buchanan might win the White House in 1996 as the Taxpayers' candidate. Phillips had devoted massive energy to getting the party on as many as forty state ballots. When he sat down with an electoral map he could, making plausible assumptions about Ralph Nader and Ross Perot, tell a story that ended with Pat Buchanan in power.

Then, K.B. was the embodiment of hope and optimism. Now, he looks as if he has just spent a night at the Munsters'. He doesn't even bother trying to spin me. "I'm getting out of here," he says, as a few followers of Collins leap from the bushes. "My political reputation is on the line." He slaps his palms together and points his index fingers toward the exit.

I follow K.B. Forbes to a chair in the hotel's elegant courtyard, through which disheveled supporters of Collins stream. Wearily, he sets about persuading me he has nothing whatsoever to do with the people around us. There comes a point in the career of every p.r. man when he must cease to worry about his client's p.r. and start to worry about his own. The Taxpayers' convention was such a moment. Even Bob Dornan, listed on the program as a convention speaker, decided to give it a miss.

The speakers inside the hall provide a mad soundtrack of political rhetoric. Apparently news of the political party in need of a candidate has inspired anyone who ever dreamed of being president to travel to the Del. "Eighteen years ago," wafts a female voice over our bewildered heads, "I was asked what I would like to do with my life, and without much hesitation I said I should like to be president of the United States." As K.B. tries to make himself heard over this, a group of maybe a dozen supporters of Collins pass through the courtyard, followed by the man himself, who sports a giant mane of red hair and a boutonniere. They walk strangely, though at first I can't quite figure out why. Then the soiled man at the front of the procession shrieks back over his shoulder, "Don't step on the lines!" The entire Collins campaign is trying to avoid stepping on the cracks in the sidewalk. "Put it this way," says another journalist, who stops to explain both to me and to K.B. just how loopy the Taxpayers Party has suddenly become. "In this crowd, the role of the Birch Society is as a *debunker* of myths." K.B. eyes me, hopefully. "All I know," he says, his eyes darting wildly in many directions, "is that I am outta here."

A few yards away, the convention proceeds at speed. Inside is a grand twelve-sided chamber lit by six magnificent chandeliers. The Taxpayers' convention consists of maybe 300 people and no mass media, only a pair of camcorders making home movies at the back of the room. Soon the presidential candidates are nominated, argued over and voted on. There are five nominees, including Collins, Phillips and Buchanan, who is of course not present to accept his nomination. A woman named Diane Templin, clad in American flag panty hose, rises and says she realized she was destined to be president while attending a spiritual retreat. She lists among her credentials for high office her sixty-seven foster children. She is followed by a former CIA agent named Ted Gundersen, who explains to the several hundred assembled listeners that the CIA has been abducting small boys in the Midwest and carting them to Washington, D.C., to participate in homosexual orgies. Only when Collins rises to speak on his own behalf does the crowd explode with true enthusiasm. Collins lays out his platform, the centerpiece of which is returning to the American people the secret trillions hidden inside the Federal Reserve.

At length I spot Howard Phillips, pacing at the back of the room. He pauses in front of one of the tiny booths that sells t-shirts and bumper stickers. (The Taxpayers' favorite: "I Love Animals—They're Delicious!") He is looking distinctly unfazed. Howard is a man of ideas; and for the sake of his ideas he's willing to subject himself to much ridicule. This tells you all you need to know about the role of ideas in contemporary politics. Ideas are what serious politics is believed to be all about and what serious politicians love to claim politics is about. But if the two biggest political parties have anything in common it is their indifference to ideas; their willingness to trample on their ideas is what makes them electable. Only fringe parties—Taxpayers, Greens, Libertarians—exhibit any fidelity to their ideas, and it is precisely this intellectual fanaticism that consigns them to oblivion.

I set out to interview Howard, but an extraordinary smelling woman intervenes. She hands me a flier. The Taxpayers' convention is rigged, she shouts. Supporters of Collins are being prevented from voting. Howard Phillips has even taken to spreading dirty lies about Collins. Incredibly, it appears somewhat true: someone has gone to the trouble of printing fliers that attack Collins.

For the next six hours I watch Howard bravely weave his way through a human stink bomb and pretend nothing has gone wrong. He holds his head high, delivers a long, proud speech and in the end rescues his party. Collins finishes second, ahead of a dormant Pat Buchanan, who finishes third. All in all, a stirring performance in the face of overwhelming odds. As I leave, I can still hear Howard's voice receding in the distance. "The victory of our cause is certain," he is saying, "though we know not the day, the year or the hour."

Later, I return to my hotel and find a fax from K.B. Forbes. "Dear Howard," it begins. "This is my letter of resignation as Communications Director of the U.S. Taxpayers Party effective today, Sunday, August 18.

"Howard, you truly are a great man dedicated to conservative principles and preserving America's Constitutional Heritage. However, this convention has attracted—what I believe to be—the rudest and most mentally unstable wannabe political activists and 'media' in America. I will not sacrifice my honor nor my reputation to assist these elements. . . ." •

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THE HARD QUESTIONS

We're number one

With the election looming, politicians and the news media may be obsessed with such mundane issues as taxes, abortion and jobs. But among foreign policy people the really big problem is how the U.S. is going to live up to its flattering but onerous title of Number One. Seminars are convoked to discuss the dilemmas of American "global leadership," and quarterly journals are replete with earnest analyses of the costs and benefits of running the world. A ponderous poli-sci label has been rolled out to describe what many of the enthusiasts would like the U.S. to be: "global hegemon."

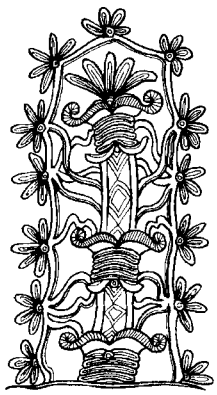
The phrase used to refer to foreign powers, and it had a bad odor. For decades the Soviet Union was denounced for its hegemony over an oppressed Eastern Europe. But, with the demise of communism, the word has apparently been purged of its negative connotations. Two editors of the *Weekly Standard*, in search of a foreign policy for candidate Dole, recently opined in the Establishment journal *Foreign Affairs* that America should seek "benevolent global hegemony." Similarly, Charles Lane, an esteemed colleague here at TNR, has described the U.S. not only as the leader but the "rightful hegemon" of the post-cold war world.

This hegemon-talk stems from an ongoing confusion across the political spectrum about what the U.S. is supposed to be. For decades, even generations, American foreign policy was defined by what it was trying to prevent rather than what it was for. It contained communism. It was, to use John F. Kennedy's phrase, the "watchman on the walls."

But, with the end of the cold war and the demise of the Soviet Union, all that collapsed. There was not much left to contain and little to be anti- about. The public accepted this condition with equanimity, even relief; the foreign policy community with concern approaching alarm. Attempts to rouse Americans to establish a "New World Order" failed, as George Bush learned when Americans took the Persian Gulf War victory as an opportunity to return to domestic concerns with a vengeance.

The public's main concern about the end of the cold war was that jobs would be slashed in the military and the defense industries. This anxiety was, however, quickly alleviated by both parties, which have conspired to keep military spending near traditional cold war levels. Shortly after the Republican sweep in 1994, Bill Clinton, finger to the wind, announced he was adding $25 billion to his five-year defense program. Raising the ante, the Congress this year tacked on an extra $7 billion to the administration's $264 billion defense budget to buy B-2 bombers and nuclear subs the Pentagon says it does not need.

It serves little purpose these days to think of the military budget in terms of foreign policy objectives. It is a disguised pump-priming mechanism, a mutual back-scratching device among congressmen, a bribe or payoff, and a symbolic assertion of national power. For this reason it has been, and will long remain, largely impervious to the budget choppers. The military budget is also an election year gimmick. Kennedy successfully used a non-existent "missile gap" to squeeze into the White House. This year Bob Dole, seeking a campaign toehold, declares that "our defense budget has been cut too far and too fast," while his counselors urge increases ranging from $20 to $80 billion a year. If he makes any political inroads with this ploy, it's a sure bet Bill Clinton will endorse it as his own.



For foreign policy specialists, the post-cold war transition has been difficult. The contest with another great power augmented the role of the state, of the presidency, of the military and of foreign policy itself on the national agenda. It inspired a level of global involvement in the affairs of other nations that would have otherwise been hard to justify, and it induced considerable deference by allies and protectorates to Washington's wishes. Trade wars do not command the same respect. All of this inflated the scope and the importance of the national security bureaucracy, both within and outside the government.

The cold war also endowed American global activism with moral purpose. This waned seriously at times, particularly during the Vietnam War. But it was brilliantly restored by Ronald Reagan, who wrapped himself in the mantle of Wilsonian idealism even better than its originator did. Yet the Reagan formula depended on more than just the Gipper's inspirational packaging. It required a powerful foe whose containment justified a host of sometimes shady activities, particularly in the nether parts of the Third World.

The problem the new hegemonists face today is that there is no enemy both evil and powerful. Cuba, Iran and North Korea won't do. As a result, the public cannot be roused to perform its imperial responsibility to maintain world order by sending troops to fight tribal wars in Bosnia, Rwanda and Somalia or extending American influence through large infusions of foreign aid to client states. America's trading partners refuse to comply with our economic boycotts against governments we don't like. It is all very well to proclaim that the U.S. must exert global leadership in the interests of peace, democracy and free markets. But what happens when the would-be hegemon gives marching orders and nobody follows?

The whole imperial scenario of "benevolent hegemony" poses a number of problems. First, it focuses almost entirely on military power—the Gulf war scenario projected ad infinitum around the globe. However, the most pressing problems the U.S. is likely to face in the decades ahead won't be susceptible to carrier groups and smart bombs. More likely, they'll be regional ethnic conflicts, economic quarrels with our trading partners, uncontrollable migration from poor nations to rich ones, environmental disasters and transborder epidemics. Do we bring out the B-2s against viruses, terrorists or the next shipment of Toyotas?

Second, every hegemony induces its equal and opposite reaction. We may think, like the *Standard*'s editors, that Americans have a "responsibility to lead the world." But there is likely to be some difference of opinion about that, even among our current allies. Hegemony, as Charles de Gaulle used to complain, always seems like the ideal system to the nation practicing it; the very effort to impose it will inspire coalitions to resist us.

Third, hegemony is expensive. The enormous military costs, and periodic wars, involved in exerting it eventually sap the hegemon's economic strength and open the path to challengers. This is what happened to Britain in the first decades of the twentieth century, and to its world-dominating predecessors before it.

Republicans may yearn for the Reagan era of compliant allies, big missiles, big talk (and big deficits), but the instruments of power and the rules of competition have changed. Roll over, Ronald Reagan. It's time to move on.

RONALD STEEL

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Twisted Tales

Robert Altman is American film's chief artisan of costume jewelry. At first glance, the design seems cunning, the gold and the jewels seem rich. Before long, we can see that the design is a mere contraption, the ingredients are gilt and glass.

It doesn't take long in Altman's latest, **Kansas City** (Fine Line), for the brummagem to show. The film's overall shape, which again teases with promise, is much like that of his earlier picture *Nashville.* There the story strands wove in and out of country music; here the strands weave in and out of Kansas City jazz. The film returns frequently to an all-night jam session in a black club—the year is 1934—and sometimes jazz underlies scenes set elsewhere. The jazz is apparently meant as the principle by which all else is judged, the real integrity of a city rancid with corruption.

This turns out to be more the case than Altman could have wished. To my ear, though inexpert in jazz, the music sounds fine. (Present-day jazz musicians represent figures of the past.) And the music not only sounds more true than the rest of life in Kansas City, it's more true than Altman's film about that life.

He and a co-writer, Frank Barhydt, criss-cross some plots in Kansas City (Altman's hometown) on Election Day—political and social stories, black and white. Except for one of the black stories, all these elements are in some degree criminal. At the start a manicurist, played by Jennifer Jason Leigh, comes to the home of Miranda Richardson, wife of a wealthy politico, Michael Murphy. Leigh is a substitute for the manicurist who usually visits, and we soon find out why. After she delivers the bottle of laudanum that the regular manicurist always brings, Leigh whips out a pistol and kidnaps Richardson. We learn that Leigh's boyfriend, Dermot Mulroney, is a captive of a vindictive black gambler-gangster, Harry Belafonte. Leigh hopes that Richardson's husband will use his Kansas City clout to get her boyfriend released from Belafonte's clutches.

Confusing? Well, it's a bit more so in the picture. We don't see Mulroney's abduction and the reason for it until after we see Leigh's abduction of Richardson. Further twists involve Missouri political power in the person of Tom Pendergast (with one funny reference to Truman), criminal sway in the person of a hood named John Lazia and the adolescence of Charlie Parker. (Yes, that Charlie Parker.) He befriends a 14-year-old black country girl who has come to town to have her baby; and their story, which includes Charlie's mother, is the one ray of light in the general murk.

The film's structure gets so mired in cleverness, so warped with distention, that the intended grittiness becomes something of a joke. Occasionally the dialogue has a lift. Leigh and Richardson, the latter spaced out on laudanum, have exchanges that are as amusingly irrelevant as parts of *Pulp Fiction* (which in turn was like the gangster dialogue in Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player*). But most of the talk is banal. The worst is in the sequences where Belafonte walks around his lair, taunting his prisoner Mulroney, smoking big cigars and snorting coke, and ruminating in supposedly philosophical style about the fate he will deal his victim. Has there ever been a James Bond film—to name just one species—in which an arch-villain did not ruminate thus about the captive 007?

Visually, *Kansas City* has subtle touches, which is why, at the start, it seems genuine. The cinematographer is Oliver Stapleton, who did *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Prick Up Your Ears* among others; and he begins with Leigh's car driving up to the politico's mansion in what seems to be black and white but isn't quite. The sequence looks, almost smells, like 1934. Soon color enters the film, not in the routine transformation before our eyes but with gradual seepage. This procedure adds range without losing period. And the production designer, Stephen Altman, son of the director, created settings and picked locations that are immediately evocative of the 1930s, the best such evocation since the Los Angeles of Polanski's *Chinatown.*

The cast is spotty. Michael Murphy has never been much more than a warm body. Miranda Richardson, who has talent, can't use it here since she spends most of her time in space. Harry Belafonte, sans hairpiece, strives to put an edge of novelty on his trite role. As his victim, Dermot Mulroney is weirdly nil. As the pregnant adolescent, Ajia Mignon Johnson is dignified and sweet.

The picture's worst burden is Jennifer Jason Leigh. When she sinks her teeth into a "character" like Dorothy Parker and like this woman, we feel the bite ourselves. (The figure is apt here because

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Celestial Clockwork. *Parisian patisserie. A fast, sexy farce about a young soprano trying to make it in opera. Full of fizz and fun. (Reviewed 9/2/96)* **Manny & Lo.** *Two sisters, 11 and 17, living on the road and loving it. Delicate comedy about the possibilities of absolute freedom. (8/19/96)* **A Time to Kill.** *A Mississippi black man is tried for killing his daughter's rapists. The gravity of the theme is compromised, but the acting is superb and the directing dynamic. (9/2/96)* **Walking and Talking.** *Young New York women handling and fumbling life, love, sex. Familiar stuff, but the dialogue is brisk, and there's some neat small-scale acting. (8/19/96)*—**SK**

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Leigh wears some sort of denture for the role.) The woman she plays is by profession a telegraphist at Western Union. When she kidnaps Richardson to help her boyfriend, she assumes a tough-moll character like the Jean Harlow she has seen in gangster pictures. To bring off this masquerade convincingly, Leigh would have had to play a double role: the telegraphist and the Harlow impersonation. This is quite beyond Leigh's powers; so all we get is Leigh behaving grotesquely. Worse, it doesn't remotely sound like Harlow. Leigh's clumsy imitation of genuine acting confirms the dubiousness of the whole film.

In **The Fan** (TriStar) Robert De Niro plays his second baseball role and his third nutcase of a pointedly contemporary kind. (He has done other kinds.) In 1973 he was the fatally ill catcher in *Bang the Drum Slowly*, one of his most gently modeled performances. As for the nuts: in *Taxi Driver* (1973) he was a Vietnam veteran so tormented by the sleaze around him that he became homicidal. In *The King of Comedy* (1983) he was an autograph hunter driven off-balance by his hunger for media fame. Now De Niro takes that hunger further. He plays a San Francisco baseball fan, near-manic in his passion, who plagues a star player, trying to get closer and closer to him, seized by a need he doesn't fully understand. In the course of the fan's passion he commits various lunacies. At the climactic moment, gone insane in his frenzy, he faces the baseball star, Wesley Snipes, in the rain on a baseball field. Snipes cries desperately, "What do you want from me?" De Niro makes some footling reply about wanting gratitude for the help he thinks he has rendered. But the real reply is: "I want to be you."

If Phoef Sutton's screenplay (based on Peter Abrahams's novel) had built to this point, it would have fulfilled its theme—its disclosure of the poisons of hype that infect the air we breathe today. Absolutely everyone today, it seems, is avid for Warhol's 15 minutes. But Warhol was wrong: the vast majority of us will never get near those 15 minutes, and many now suffer because of that fact. The worst of the poison, the desperation to be the center of electronic attention, is its wild distortion of values. (The other evening I saw a crowd in a New York street gathered around a person who reads the weather report on a TV station. The crowd wanted autographs.)

Sutton's screenplay dramatizes fairly well the way De Niro's mania wrecks his personal and business life, but it grabs so furiously at twists as it goes on that it turns into sheer movie silliness. Still, De Niro has power, and he pounds the character along. Snipes, called on for

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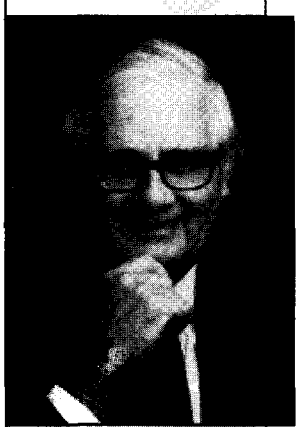

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less, delivers it. Tony Scott, who directed *Top Gun*, keeps the action fast, even faster as the action gets thinner. A salute to Dariusz Wolski's cinematography. Almost every frame is lighted shrewdly.

Queries. Cal Ripken Jr., stellar shortstop of the Baltimore Orioles, was the baseball consultant. How come, then, Snipes always goes directly from the dugout to the batter's box? What happened to the on-deck circle? How come nobody objects when Snipes goes out to the mound to speak to the pitcher he's facing? And the San Francisco Giants will doubtless be pleased to see that their stadium (actually shot in a different stadium) never has an empty seat at any game. •

The Word-hoard's Spray

By Jonathan Spence

An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911 Edited and translated by Stephen Owen

(W.W. Norton, 1,212 pp., $39.95)

The decision to make a comprehensive and analytical anthology of the entire 3,000-year tradition of Chinese literature is an extraordinarily bold one. To my knowledge, over the last half century only three scholars have attempted such a task in English: Cyril Birch, in his *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, which appeared in two volumes in 1965 and 1972, 968 pages in total; Victor Mair, with *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, which appeared in 1994, 1,335 pages in total; and now Stephen Owen. The date 1911 in Owen's title refers to the fact that China's last dynasty, the Qing, fell in that year, and he has decided not to include works written after that date even if they were structured in a classical or traditional mode. The same decision was made by Victor Mair, and both Owen and Mair choose the same man, the brilliant but acerbic scholar Wang Guowei—who committed suicide in 1927 in despair over the political and intellectual chaos of China—to bring their vast sagas to an end.

The poem of Wang's with which Owen closes his anthology is beautifully chosen to illustrate the wry humor with which Wang viewed his and China's predicament, before he succumbed altogether to despair:

> Does something real lie behind
> the words in your new songs?
> Fancy phrases such as these
> can make you want to laugh.
> "Broken-hearted in lamplight"—
> now who did you write that for?
>
> I lean on the desk and peer around
> at recent compositions,
> then turn off the light and reckon up
> joys known in the past—
> trivial passions of the heart,
> and nothing corresponds.

Owen's anthology differs from its two predecessors in a number of important ways. Owen has himself made all the translations from the Chinese (with two exceptions, that he notes, in the field of seventeenth-century fiction), a really astonishing feat of scholarship and endurance, whereas both Birch and Mair drew on a wide range of contributors to their volumes. Owen's structuring of the selections is far more analytically complex and his commentary is far more detailed than anything attempted by Birch and Mair. He works chronologically across time from the beginnings to the early twentieth century, but on occasion he pools the works on a given theme according to his sense of aesthetic and intellectual consonance, even if they were written millennia apart; he backs his complex structure by a full index (absent in Birch and Mair) that covers first lines of poems cited, author and title, and for good measure includes a second more general index to broad topics; and he gives a remarkably full overview of Chinese history as he moves from section to section of the anthology. Owen has also made the decision to give all his renderings of Chinese names and terms in "pin-yin," the romanization system adopted in the People's Republic in the 1950s, which is now used by many scholars in the West—though not without debate over its lack of charm and the difficulty of pronouncing it if not fully versed in the system's minutiae.

All three of the anthologies give a rich and complicated overview of the Chinese tradition, with fine (though different) mixes of poetry, oratory, philosophical reflection, history, lighter essays, literary criticism, biography, drama, short stories and selections from novels. Owen leaves out some things included at length in the two predecessor works, but he more than compensates for this by including many other items that the other anthologies ignore. His overall goal, as he puts it, is neither to perpetuate a "conservative notion of 'canon'" nor to "attempt to construct a counter-canon of texts suppressed and overlooked." Birch and Mair would have more or less followed the same claim. Birch did include some "proletarian" literature (and even some of Mao's poems), while Mair stated at the outset his expressed intention of making a special effort to include women writers when it seemed justified, as well as popular genres derived from oral storytelling.

Owen includes a few women writers, but what he appears to mean by his remarks on the canon is that he will not go out of his way to include women writers in response to current fashion unless he feels the inclusion aesthetically and intellectually justified. Those women who clearly meet these standards are, for him, three in number: Yu Xuan-ji (mid-ninth century), with three poems; Li Qing-zhao (1084-c. 1151), with four poems and one long and brilliant essay on the follies of her husband's mania for collecting rare texts and antiquities; and the late Qing revolutionary Qiu Jin (1879-1907), with two poems.

Owen certainly has the right to justify the limited number of such selections on aesthetic or contextual grounds, but sometimes he seems somewhat arbitrary in his exclusions. Ban Zhao (45-c.120), for example, was a fine writer, honored by later scholars; Victor Mair devoted seven pages to her work, terming her "undoubtedly the most celebrated female writer of early China." And sometimes Owen seems to set the scene for the inclusion of women and then apparently changes his mind. Thus, in his opening essay on the magnificent flowering of poetry and prose in the Tang dynasty (618-906), Owen mentions that "courtesans such as Xue Tao (768-831) developed reputations as poets" and states that the woman writer Shang-guan Wan-er "was probably the most influential literary figure of the first decade of the eighth century—something possible in the Tang as it could not have been for the rest of the history of imperial China." Yet the reader is given no writing by either woman to help in substantiating

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or denying these claims.

Readers may deplore or salute Owen's economy here, but there is no doubt that he has mischievously whetted our appetite for more by telling us that Shang-guan Wan-er was "tattooed with the mark of a criminal" after her family had been executed in a purge, but rose to become the private secretary to the Empress, that in middle age she was married off to that same Empress's son, that she ended her days as "arbitrix of court taste, presiding over poetry competitions and the mixed-sex outings of the court." Even if "very little of her work survives today," one would still value the chance to evaluate even a fragment from such a woman. And the same could be said for Liu Shi, an accomplished poet whose life as courtesan, lover and wife spanned the volatile transition between the late Ming and early Qing periods; for Cai Wan, a fine poet in her own right and co-writer of many of her governor-general husband's state papers; for Wang Duan, known for her poetic abilities from the age of 7 onward; for the painter-poet Gutaiqing; or for Xi Peilan, known as the finest among Qing women poets.

There may also be poems by women in China's earliest anthology—the *Classic of Poetry*, or *Book of Songs*, which incorporated verse from the twelfth to seventh century B.C., and was allegedly edited into its final form by Confucius himself in the fifth century B.C. Take two lovely examples given by Owen:

Rooster Crows

The woman said, "The rooster crows."
The man said, "Still the dark before dawn."
"Get you up, man—look at the night!—
the morning star is sparkling;
go roving and go roaming,
shoot the wild goose and the teal.

When your arrows hit them,
I will dress them just for you;
when they're dressed, we'll drink the wine,
and I will grow old with you.
There will be harps to attend us,
and all will be easy and good.

If I know that you will come,
I'll make a gift of many jewels;
if I know you will accept,
I'll show my care with many jewels;
if I know you will love me,
I'll answer you with many jewels."

or this:

No Clothes

How can you say, "I have no clothes"?—
I will share my greatcoat with you.
The king is raising his army,
we will make ready pike and spear,
and I will share all foes with you.

How can you say, "I have no clothes"?—
I will share my shift with you.
The king is raising his army,
we will make ready halberd and pike,
and I will set out with you.

How can you say,"I have no clothes"?—
I will share my war-kilt with you.
The king is raising his army,
we will make ready buffcoat and dirk,
and I will march with you.

But Owen is correctly silent about making a firm declaration of a woman's authorship in either case, since we cannot prove that these poems were not written by a man assuming a woman's voice and stance, as was done again and again in later centuries. With the four-line poem attributed to "Madam Shen" from the early sixth century, we are perhaps on firmer ground to claim a woman's authorship:

Her light tresses mimic the drifting clouds,
her twin brows copy the crescent moon.
Where waters clear, she straightens skewed hairpins;
where duckweed opens, she smoothes tousled hair.

But again the attribution to a woman writer may not be definitive.

One other problematic aspect of this anthology, in a way related to the problem of space versus economy, lies in the coverage devoted to the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). I would not have been at all surprised if, in the overall context of a Chinese canon, this section had been shorter than its present 240 pages, for the Qing came at the tail end of a brilliant and prolonged period of cultural richness. But the domination of that section by no less than 130 pages of translation from the single play *The Palace of Lasting Life* by Hong Sheng is strange. This is a fine play, popular and elegant, and it deals with the celebrated and tragic romance between the Tang emperor and his concubine Yang Guifei. But it would have been grand to use some of this space for examples of the Qing vernacular novel, especially the middle- to late-eighteenth-century masterpiece *Dream of the Red Chamber*, also known as *The Story of the Stone*. True, this novel has been wonderfully translated already by David Hawkes and is widely available in paperback, but *The Palace of Lasting Life* exists in a workmanlike translation, too. And *Dream of the Red Chamber* does include the subtlest, funniest and most learned passages ever written in China about the intellectual world of Chinese women, their relationships to each other and to the wider world around them.

Owen's anthology is, in any case, so crammed with magnificent offerings

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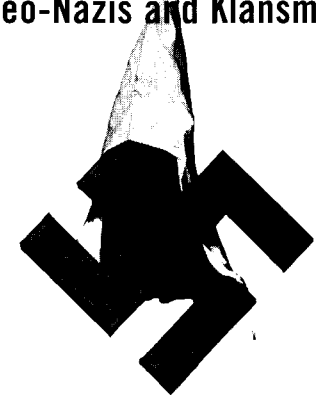
Portraits of American Neo-Nazis and Klansmen



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that there is little purpose in wondering about some of the lacunae. The reader with a nodding acquaintance with Chinese literature will probably turn first to such powerful and renowned poets as Du Fu, Li Bo, Bo Ju-yi and Su Dong-po, all of whom are given ample and moving coverage. But once that preliminary thirst is satisfied, one will swiftly find other surprising and wonderful things spread across the entire book.

Consider, for instance, a poem attributed to a legendary early rhetorician, Song Yu, but probably written (in Owen's view) around the first century B.C. Told by the king whom he serves that there is only a single wind that blows alike upon all human beings in China and makes no distinctions, Song Yu replies with rhetorical brilliance that such a remark cannot possibly be sustained. There are two winds, he says, one for the rich and one for the poor. Challenged by his ruler to justify this observation, Song Yu offers this class analysis of the two winds, the first or upper-class one being male (or representing the *yang* force), the other female or *yin*:

When you have such male wind,
  pure and cool,
it swirls aloft, rising then sinking,
and mounts up over the highest walls
and enters the palace's deepest parts.
Touching flowers and leaves, shaking loose
  scent,
it lingers about among pepper and
cinnamon, then soaring in flight over
  ruffled waters,
it is ready to strike the lotus blossoms.
It courses through clover,
runs upon rosemary,
flattens the rue,
and spreads sprouting willows.
Whirling, dashing, bounding up over,
its rustling strips all aromatics.

Thereafter it tarries in courtyards a while,
then northward climbs to the marble hall,
and striding through gauze draperies,
it passes into the women's chambers.
By this we recognize it as the king's wind.

In contrast, Song Yu reflects on the wind that afflicts the poor:

The wind of ordinary people:
rises rapidly within the back alleys,
in puffs of dust suddenly surging,
a troubled and turbulent whirling,
ramming holes and slipping through gates,
stirring grit grains,
blowing dead ashes,
kicking up refuse and filth,
lifting garbage and trash,
pushing through edges of jug-shard
  windows,
it gets into their rooms.

And when this kind of wind strikes a
person, his manner shows discomfort
and revulsion,
driving in mugginess, bringing rheums.
People's hearts grow depressed,
it brings sickness, produces fevers;
it strikes the lips and makes them crack,
it gets into eyes which grow bleary and red,
coughing and sneezing,
with no relief in life or in death.
This is what I mean by the common folk's
  womanly wind.

Equally startling, and from an only slightly later period, is Lu Ji's *Wen fu*, or "Poetic Exposition on Literature," written in the late third century. This extraordinary work, with a preface in prose and a lengthy analysis in verse of the processes and the patterns of literary creation, is surely one of the world's great works on the art of literature. Victor Mair's anthology contains a fine translation of this work, by the distinguished sinologist Achilles Fang. In translating literary criticism from another age and culture for today's general readers or students, the scholar is faced with a different range of daunting problems concerning accessibility and contextualization. Owen has already shown his mastery over this aspect of the Chinese critical tradition with an earlier volume, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, that appeared in 1992.

The difficulty of rendering such concepts can be seen by noting the considerable differences in Owen's own version of Lu Ji's essay-poem in his earlier volume with his version of the same work in the new anthology. Owen has clearly thought through the changes with great care, but that he felt the need to do so, and the amount of changes he saw fit to make in such a short space of time, is indicative of the difficulty of the task. In his rendering in the Norton anthology of Lu Ji's opening stanzas, in which the writer contemplates the great works of the past before embarking on his own, Owen has found an extraordinary balance and vividness:

He stands in the very center and scans the
  darkness,
Fosters feelings and aims in classics of old.
He moves with four seasons and sighs at
  their passing,
Views all the world's things, broods on their
  fullness;
He grieves for leaves falling in harsh
  autumn,
He delights in sweet spring's supple
  branches;
His mind shivers as he takes frost to heart;
His aims are remote, they look down upon
  clouds.
He sings glorious achievements, inherited
  by our age,
Chants of pure fragrance, left from those
  before;
He roams in the groves and treasuries of
  literary works,
And admires the perfect balance in their
  well-wrought craft.
With strong feeling he puts book aside and
  takes his writing brush
To make it appear in literature.

This is how it begins:
  retraction of vision, inversion of
    listening,
  absorbed in thought and seeking all
    around,
  essence galloping to the world's eight
    ends,
  the mind roaming thousands of yards,
    high and low.
And when it is attained:
  light gathers about moods and they
    grow in brightness,
  things become luminous and draw
    each other forward;
He then quaffs the word-hoard's spray of
  droplets,
And rolls in his mouth the sweet moisture
  of classics;
He drifts between Heaven and the abyss,
  at rest in the current,
He bathes in falling streams, immersed in
  their waters.

The remainder of Lu Ji's essay/poem is translated by Owen with equal bravura.

Another way to approach this anthology is to focus on texts that had profound resonance within the Chinese tradition itself and watch Owen at work as a scholar-craftsman, conscious of the glosses of scores of earlier generations of Chinese scholars, and also of the attempts by others to make their own English-language renderings, even as he attempts to make his own as good as he possibly can. One example that at once suggests itself is the opening poem from China's earliest surviving anthology, the *Classic of Poetry* mentioned above.

The Western pioneer in rendering a textually meticulous translation of the *Classic of Poetry* and its glosses was the Scottish Protestant missionary James Legge, who labored for decades in the later nineteenth century in Hong Kong on translating the corpus of the so-called Confucian Classics, before receiving the chair in Chinese literature at Oxford. Legge was not only an admirable scholar of China in his own right, he also had the help and advice of fine Chinese scholars—the most famous was Wang Tao—in reading the original works and analyzing their commentaries. As Englished by Legge in 1872, the first three stanzas of the opening poem of the celebrated anthology ran as follows:

Kwan-kwan go the ospreys,
On the islet in the river.
The modest, retiring, virtuous, young
  lady:—
For our prince a good mate she.

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Here long, there short, is the duckweed,
To the left, to the right, borne about by
the current.
The modest, retiring, virtuous, young
lady:—
Waking and sleeping, he sought her.

He sought her and found her not,
And waking and sleeping he thought
about her.
Long he thought; oh! long and anxiously;
On his side, on his back, he turned, and
back again.

Legge's thorough gloss on the poem included these thoughts relating to broad problems of interpretation:

It is sufficient in this Ode to hear the friends of a bridegroom expressing their joy on occasion of his marriage with the virtuous object of his love, brought home in triumph after long quest and various disappointments. I am not disposed to call in question the belief that that lady was the mistress of Wan's harem; but I venture to introduce here the substance of a note from the "Annals of the Empire", Bk. I., p. 14, to show how uncertain is the date at least of their marriage ... These considerations prove that the specification of events, as occurring in certain definite years of that early time, was put down very much at random by the chronologers, and that the traditional interpretation of the Odes must often be fanciful ... It is said to be one of the allusive pieces. At the same time a metaphorical element is found in the characters of the objects alluded to: the discreet reserve between the male and female of the osprey; and the soft and delicate nature of the duckweed.

Just over sixty years after Legge's version, in 1937, the formidable Arthur Waley, undoubtedly the finest translator from the Chinese (and from the Japanese) in the first half of this century, offered his own version:

"Fair, fair," cry the ospreys
On the island in the river.
Lovely is this noble lady,
Fit bride for our lord.

In patches grows the water mallow;
To left and right one must seek it.
Shy was this noble lady;
Day and night he sought her.

Sought her and could not get her;
Day and night he grieved.
Long thoughts, oh, long unhappy
thoughts,
Now on his back, now tossing on to his side.

In his volume, Waley contented himself with the briefest of glosses:

One has to bear in mind that the bridegroom and bride are in other parts of the world often treated as though they were a king and queen. It is not impossible that such a song as this, though royal in origin, was afterwards sung at ordinary people's weddings.

And now Owen. He renders the opening stanzas of the same poem thus:

Fishhawk

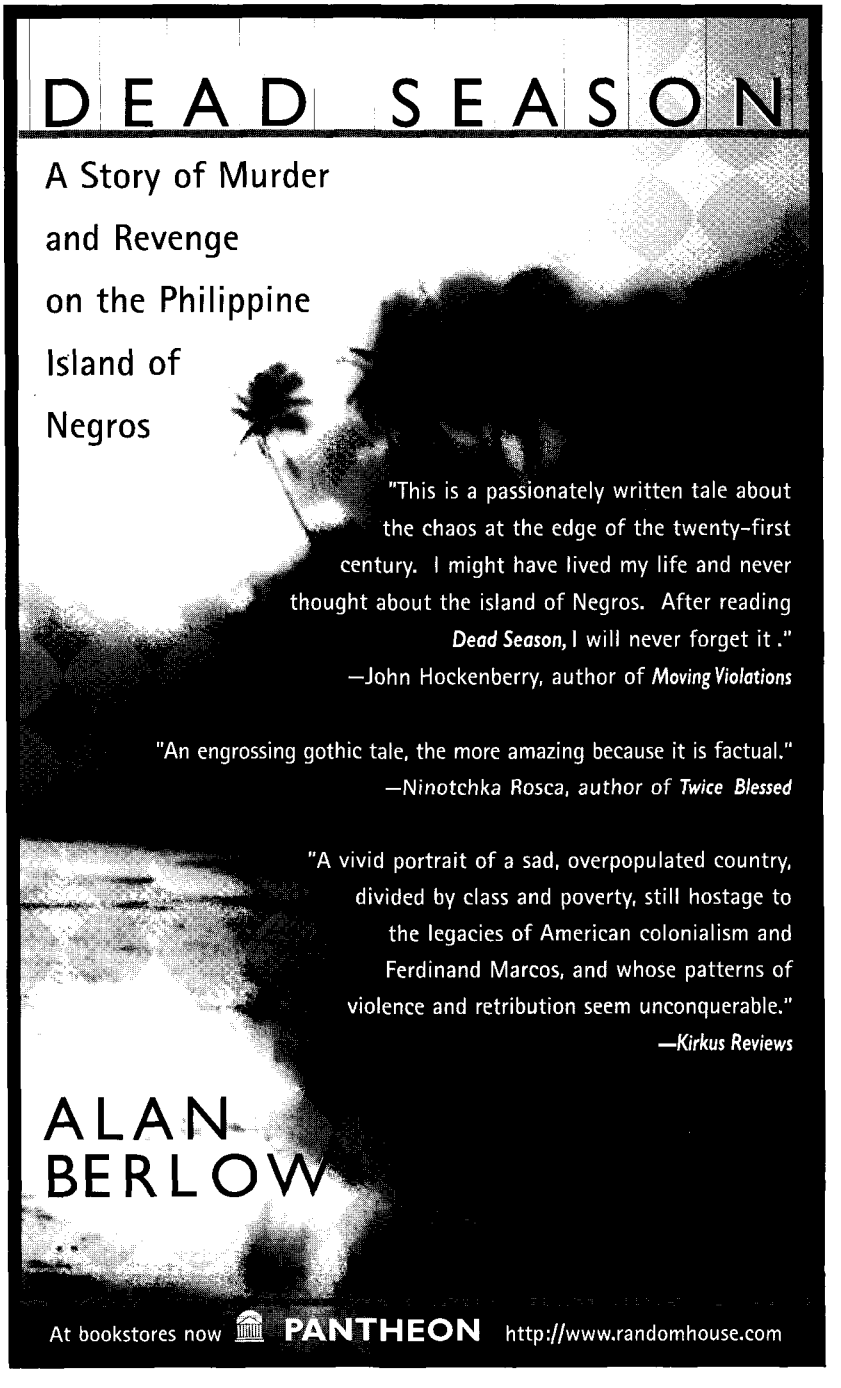
The fishhawks sing *gwan gwan*
on sandbars of the stream.
Gentle maiden, pure and fair,
fit pair for a prince.

Watercress grows here and there,
right and left we gather it.
Gentle maiden, pure and fair,

wanted waking and asleep.
Wanting, sought her, had her not,
waking, sleeping, thought of her,
on and on he thought of her,
he tossed from one side to another.

In his gloss on the poem, Owen notes that Confucius refers to this specific poem in his *Analects* as portraying "delight without wantonness, sadness without hurtful pain." He then goes on to give a cogent summary of the long debate by Chinese writers over this one poem:

Since Confucius' arrangement of the anthology was supposed to have been purposeful, "Fishhawk," as the first poem in the collection, was made to bear a special interpretive weight. According to the traditional Confucian interpretation known as the "Mao commentary," the poem represented the "virtuous attainment" of the Queen Consort of King Wen of Zhou, who "delighted that pure and fair maidens had been found to be mated with the prince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[i.e., King Wen]." Thus it has been read as a poem expressing an absence of jealousy, which in turn showed the perfect harmony of the royal household. In this way the poem was supposed to initiate King Wen's process of civilizing the land, beginning with the most intimate and close of relationships, then gradually extending his influence outward.

If the references to the poem ended here, Owen's contribution would have been useful but not especially unusual. But it is a unique feature of his anthology that he does not just end there. He follows up in the same section with two scenes drawn from the wonderful late-sixteenth-century play *Peony Pavilion* by the dramatist Tang Xian-zu. This play has had enduring resonance and popularity in China since it first appeared, but its significance for Owen includes the fact that two scenes from the play—scenes seven and nine—include an elaborate discussion of the same poem, "Fishhawk," which sets the mood for all the elaborate and passionate action of the play that follows.

In scene seven, we are shown the heroine chanting the "Fishhawk" poem aloud with her tutor Chen, in the presence of her maid Spring Scent. But the languid spring air, the heroine's ripening sexuality, and the ancient words intersect with catastrophic results. As Spring Scent sings in a soliloquy that opens scene nine:

> I go with my young mistress day and night ... Since her father engaged a tutor to give her lessons, she has been reading the *Classic of Poetry*; but when she got to the part of the first stanza that goes "gentle maiden pure and fair, fit pair for a prince," she grew pensive and put down the book, sighing, "In this the loving feelings of the Sage are fully revealed. How clear it is that those in the past had the same sentiments that we do today!"

And when the tutor Chen appears, Spring Scent puts the blame for her mistress's new "mood" squarely on the scholar's shoulders:

> Chen: And what is this "mood"?
>
> Spring Scent: You still don't know, but her father is really going to put the blame on you.
>
> Chen: For what?
>
> Spring Scent: I'm talking about that lecture you gave her on the Mao commentary to the *Classic of Poetry*. Well, you've gone and Mao'ed her up all too well. Ah, my poor young mistress!
>
> [*Sings*]
>
> All because of that poem
> she was lectured into passion.
>
> Chen: All I did was lecture on "The fishhawks sing *gwan gwan*."
>
> Spring Scent: And precisely because of this my mistress is saying, "The fishhawks may have been shut in but they still have their 'stirrings' on sandbars of the stream. Is it possible a person can be less well off than a bird?"

By thus integrating the poem and the play, which were written over 2,000 years apart, Owen draws today's reader into the very heart of the Chinese tradition itself. He shrewdly juxtaposes two "canonical" moments, so that the eras intermesh to perfection. It is the many repetitions of such moments in Owen's anthology, as well as the skill of his own translations and the depth of his own readings, that make this truly a collection to be treasured.

JONATHAN SPENCE is the author most recently of *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xinquan* (W.W. Norton).

The Incredible Lightness

BY STANISLAW BARANCZAK

Slowness
by Milan Kundera
translated from the French by Linda Asher

(HarperCollins, 156 pp., $21)

Akiba Rubinstein, one of the most imaginative chess players of all time, is said to have been the butt of a practical joke. Before a game in which he was supposed to play white, somebody nailed his queen's pawn to the chessboard, thus subtly signaling that they would love, just for variety's sake, to see him make anything other than his favorite opening move. In chess, you can be predictable in your choice of moves and still display enough artistic flair in the rest of your game to be admired for your brilliance. In literature, however, repetition is not quite so enabling. After reading *Slowness*, some admirer of Milan Kundera should find a solid, six-foot-long iron nail (or, better still, the aspen stake recommended by every serious treatise on vampyromachia) and finally stop the writer's favorite pawn from resurfacing on the same familiar square of the first paragraph of his next novel.

This king's pawn (ex-king's, if we are talking about the quick succession of pretenders to the throne of European fiction) is, of course, Kundera's overbearing and pontificating protagonist, or narrator, or commentator. His presence has been increasingly cramping the author's literary game at least since *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. What was once annoying, however, is now insufferable, and it is the outward sign of something more disturbing that has been developing in Kundera's work for many years.

What is this mysterious something? I begin by noting that *Slowness*—and this is not the main reason for its resounding failure—is Kundera's first novel written in French. Not in Czech, and not even in the streamlined Czech-meant-to-be-translated-into-French of his Paris years, but in French from the start. It is conceivable that in his next novel the author of *Life Is Elsewhere* will make a further step in the same direction, that is, he will manage at last to wipe clean all the traces of his Middle European origins, of which a feeble trace can still be discerned in *Slowness*. But before he rides into the sunset of happy literary second-rateness, which is the fate that is guaranteed for writing in French for the French about the French, the failure of *Slowness* may be the last opportunity to make a reckoning with what has taken place, to ask some uncomfortable questions.

Whatever happened to Milan Kundera? Where is the unpredictable absurdist, the unflinchingly keen realist, the tireless complicator of the usual, the outrageous deflator of the sublime whom I used to read with bated breath and a sense of discovery? What has become of that rarest of literary gifts that his name once epitomized, the power of rendering justice to the visible universe while maintaining a faithfulness to one's aesthetic code? You might even say that fidelity to his aesthetic code has become Kundera's vice, as every new novel of his is consistently worse than the previous one. It's beginning to look as if he were

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doing it on purpose. Maybe he is on a mission to prove something. To prove what, though? That a lifetime of writing can go from effervescent—be it the Pilsner of your native tongue or the Veuve Cliquot of your adopted one—to flat? Or is it that the culture of the whole world is declining, so why not go with the flow?

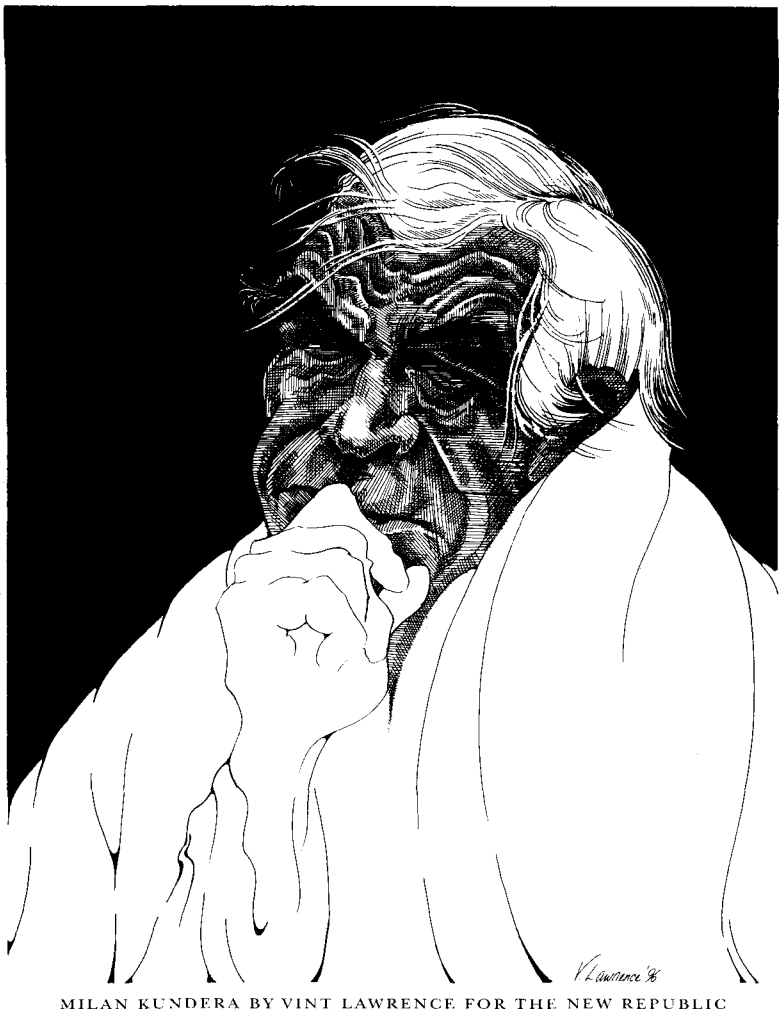
What is behind this writer's unquestionable decline? (I say unquestionable not to inhibit an opposing view but simply because I cannot imagine a literary taste for which *Slowness*, or its immediate predecessor, *Immortality*, might be valued more highly than *The Joke* or *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*.) Why does this decline look so much like a deliberate descent into trivial observation and trite generalization, without even the satisfactions of entertainment? It is devilishly hard, of course, for an artist to sustain his or her strengths for the entirety of a career. Kundera might be pardoned for having become like most of the writers who once managed to be profound and entertaining, and now are either boring yet profound, or shallow yet entertaining. But why on earth does he put so much effort into being shallow *and* boring?

Shallow, boring: those are not epithets that one should use inconsiderately, but what else can be said about *Slowness*? For a start, there is the narrator's sermonizing. As always in late Kundera, his king's pawn is set firmly onto the square of the first paragraph and makes his presence felt from the very first line of the novel. The reader may refuse to believe that such discreet elegance and civility is still possible in our barbaric world, but *Slowness* actually opens with this sentence: "We suddenly had the urge to spend the evening and night in a chateau." (I can imagine Basil Fawlty hearing this from a couple approaching the registration desk, smiling phonily, and exclaiming blissfully under his breath: "How *French*!") From that point on, the narrator leaves no doubt whatsoever that he represents the author.

And since the voice of the narrator is the voice of the author, he relieves us of the tiresome task of guessing the author's message. He will simply tell us what it is. This procedure is soon put into effect, as in *Immortality*, by sprinkling the narrative with aphoristic gems. The dicta direct our simple minds toward the profound truths that only the *philosophe* Milan Kundera and his *philosophe* narrator are capable of putting into words. On their way to the aforementioned chateau, for example, the narrator and his wife are upset by the sight of speeding motorists. Why are they rushing forward so impatiently, instead of slowing down and smelling the roses? The wife demands to know. Her omniscient husband produces a philosophical sigh and the first of his dazzlingly original generalizations:

> Speed is the form of ecstasy the technical revolution has bestowed on man.

So, that is the answer! Technology is to blame! And how true it is! For there is no denying that, but for all those cars and motorcycles, we would move at a much slower pace. And since nowadays, in the era of the "technical revolution," with all its "cold impersonality of technology," we get a lot of ecstatic kicks out of speeding, and yet we are still unhappy, then let us slow down and, as a consequence—if more Speed equals less Happiness, then less Speed equals more Happiness—be happy. Just like all those people in France 200 years ago. They were able to enjoy their chateaux in the country because the technical revolution had not yet forced them to drive there from Paris every weekend and suffer all this honking and aggravation. They mostly stayed put and, as a result, had lots of time on their hands. Which, incidentally, explains the refinement of French cooking and lovemaking, two chief methods of killing time among the denizens of the typical late-eighteenth-century chateau. Oh, how happy were those people! Just look at Fragonard. He shows what the population of France had been like before the invention of the motor vehicle spoiled everything: smiling, pretty, flying high on their swings and idling in their gardens, before having dinner served and getting laid.



MILAN KUNDERA BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Loftily worded and gravely pronounced as they are, Kundera's aphorisms turn out, on a closer look, to be a bunch of clichés, of the sort that a cabbie driving us to the airport would be embarrassed to utter. The proof of their inner shallowness is their outer profundity, their stiff crust of the dogmatic and the falsely general. Kundera seems not to realize the tremendous risk to which a novel exposes itself by the adoption of an aphoristic style. The aphorism is, in a way, inimical to the very spirit of literature. Its linguistic structure—its affirmative statement centered around some "Always...," "Never...," "All...," "Nobody...," and so on—imposes on us the appearance of universal regularity or an all-binding rule. The literary work, by contrast, thrives on the opposite. It focuses on the individual, the irregular, the exception to the rule.

When somebody sagely says something like "It never rains but pours," we don't react with exasperation, since we under-

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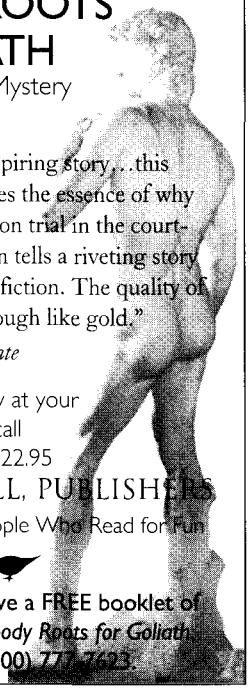

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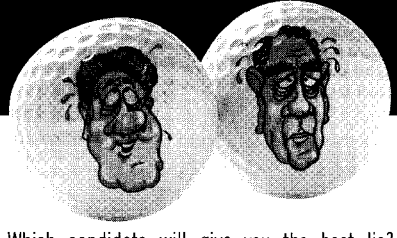

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stand that he is quoting a proverb or something like a proverb, a form representing that special area of verbal culture wedged between literature and practical communication, where the self-evident falsity of the generalization is the price that the speaker must pay for the brevity of his statement. If, however, he added to "it never rains but pours" a complication such as "...unless we are talking about minor showers, drizzles, and the like," his statement would be closer to the truth, but it would be not at all proverbial, or aphoristic. In literature proper, things look different. Here, economy may be one of the valid principles of style, but there are enough means available to achieve that goal (metaphor, for instance) to make sweeping generalization superfluous. This is why an aphorism in a literary work always feels more or less like a foreign body: less, when it's pronounced by one of the cast of characters or when it's exceptionally original, witty or thought-provoking; more, when it's coming from the oracle of the author or when it's obvious and superficial. Kundera's recent fiction is littered with the latter. The aphorisms that he scatters generously on his narrative are both overbearing and banal.

For this reason, Kundera's reader feels every now and then the irresistible urge to interrupt the narration and—somewhat childishly, perhaps—to heckle the author and the narrator. The urge is irresistible whenever Kundera hangs a big "ALWAYS" or "EVERY" sign over his pronouncements.

> ... the man hunched over his motorcycle can focus only on the present instant of his flight; he is caught in a fragment of time cut off from both the past and the future; he is wrenched from the continuity of time; he is outside time; in other words, he is in a state of ecstasy; in that state he is unaware of his age, his wife, his children, his worries, and so he has no fear, because the source of fear is in the future, and a person freed of the future has nothing to fear.

Oh yeah? Is it *always* like that? With *every* motorcyclist? Nothing to fear, huh? Well, how about a motorcyclist who has just stolen someone's motorcycle from the parking lot near a railway station, because he has to catch up with a train aboard which he had just left his bag containing an extremely expensive medication for his dying mother, while someone else's bag that he'd picked up instead turned out to be stuffed with small plastic packets of some suspicious-looking white powder? Is he, too, after the ecstasy of flight? Is he, too, unaware of his worries and without fear? OK, I made it up, but it at least looks like the beginning of a good story. So why don't you just stop your damn generalizing on the ecstasies of motorcycling, which is neither accurate nor interesting, and tell me what happens next to this unlucky motorcyclist?

This impatient reader might also warn the writer not to change the subject and switch the story to what happened to himself in that French shut-oh or whatever you call it. We are not interested in that, either! But maybe we should lighten up. The publisher's note for *Slowness*, after all, calls it "Kundera's lightest novel, a *divertimento*, an *opera buffa*." And the writer himself tells us that his new novel is supposed to have not "a single serious word in it." But then the heckler, who does not grasp the commercial value of the artist's coquetry, is tempted again: Oh yeah? You don't take your own sermonizing seriously? So why bother me with it?

Would that Kundera really had cut out all his sage-like posturing and written something light and entertaining. If it were fun, who would complain? But the book is not light and entertaining. An oppressive predictability weighs down Kundera's frolicking just as much as his philosophizing. Perhaps more so: if there's anything worse than a predictable aphorism, it's a predictable joke. The structure of *Slowness* is virtually copied from *Immortality*. Two plot lines interweave, one based in the eighteenth century (its outlines borrowed from a novella by one Vivant Denon that appeared in 1777) and the other contemporary, both of them taking place in the same chateau, or, to be precise, in the mind of the narrator as he regards the same chateau and muses about its past inhabitants and its present-day visitors. Both stories revolve around an amorous conquest, and contrast the ways in which boy meets girl, girl leads boy on, boy woos girl, girl yields to boy, boy fucks girl (or boy doesn't fuck girl, in the contemporary version).

This contrast is supposed to be the source of the playfully comic and wittily ironic effect of the whole. Or so the author/narrator keeps reminding us: the whole thing is playfully comical and wittily ironic. He has to do so every now and then, because we would not get it on our own. Comedy resulting from the confrontation of the two plot lines might have been the idea that brought *Slowness* into existence; but in the novel it somehow never comes off. Kundera's sermons could at least wake the heckler in us, but his jokes cannot make us laugh. The comedy of the novel is supposed to reach its climax in the epi-

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sode in which Vincent, the pivotal figure of the twentieth-century story, is stricken by unexpected impotence as he is about to copulate in public. Since he does his thing in public and cannot disappoint his audience, he is reduced to imitating the pelvic movements while the girl underneath him wonders what is going on.

That's the joke. Why are we not amused? The protagonist's impotence fails to elicit our laughter because it may be unexpected to him, but it is by no means unexpected to us. By this point in the novel we have already been told so much by Kundera's narrator about the beneficial effects of eighteenth-century slowness in everything, including lovemaking, that the twentieth-century hero's erotic failure is something that had to happen sooner or later to prove the narrator's point. The predictability of this joke is the logical consequence of this novel's being—contrary to Kundera's and his publisher's declarations—a didactic treatise rather than anything *buffo*. In other cases, it may be simply the matter of the waning powers of Kundera's imagination. Whatever the reason, all the intentionally comic episodes in *Slowness* have a doomed look of *déjà vu* about them even before they manage to develop. It's enough for the reader to hear that a heroine in an emotional crisis is headed to the chateau's swimming pool to make a correct guess as to what will happen next: yes, of course, the unsuccessful-suicide-due-to-the-miscalculation-of-the-depth-of-the-water scene that we have seen in dozens of film comedies from Fellini to Skolimowski.

Predictability also mars the acts of Berck the French politician and Cechoripsky the Czech scholar, but these characters are doomed to unfunniness also for a different reason. Predictability aside, the surest way to kill a joke is to push it too far. This is especially true of risqué jokes, of jokes that may offend. There is an invisible but inviolable line that the joker may approach, sometimes very closely, but never cross; and if he crosses it, the laughter of his audience turns instantly into frozen silence. The placement of the line or the longevity of the taboo may vary according to the value systems of different communities, but every community has its own lines and taboos of that sort, and they are set quite firmly. Sometimes the limits of a joke's acceptability are a community's revulsion at ethnic, religious, racial, sexual or other stereotypes of itself; but sometimes the refusal to see anything funny in a joke is owed simply to human decency. You don't have to be an advo-

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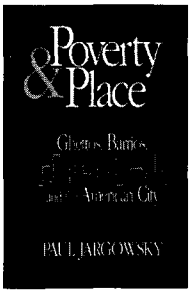

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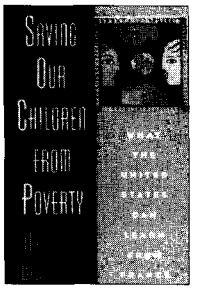

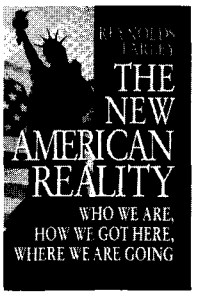

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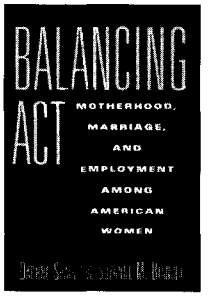

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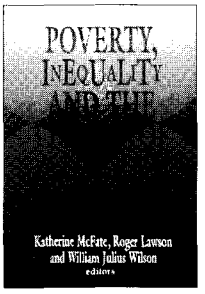

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cate for the rights of the disabled to refrain from ridiculing the sick and the crippled, and so on. The two areas of life that make comedy awkward or ugly are authentic human suffering and authentic human kindness. The former, because there is too much real pain around to aggravate it with ridicule; the latter, because there is too little real goodness in ourselves to intimidate it with laughter when we see it in others.

I know, I know. Kundera's novel has "not a single serious word in it." Yet this disclaimer is particularly false about Kundera's treatment of Berck and Cechoripsky. He thinks that, in the creation of these two characters, he is in the business of social satire; but they are caricatured so brutally and unsparingly that the reader is startled by the quantity of venom suddenly coming to the surface of this allegedly innocent merriment. Berck stands here for all politicians, or what Kundera calls the "dancers" of contemporary political culture:

> All politicians nowadays [note, again, the "all"] ... have a bit of the dancer in them, and all dancers are involved in politics, which however should not lead us to mistake the one for the other. The dancer differs from the politician in that he seeks not power but glory; his desire is not to impose this or that social scheme on the world (he couldn't care less about that) but to take over the stage so as to beam forth his self.
>
> Taking over the stage requires keeping other people off it.... [T]he dancer throws down the gauntlet to the whole world: who can appear more moral (more courageous, more decent, more sincere, more self-sacrificing, more truthful) than he? And he utilizes every hold that lets him put the other person in a morally inferior situation.

And so the aggressively stupid yet cleverly manipulative Berck is shown as a "dancer" who has built his career on photo ops and soundbites; he spends his life posing cynically with starving African children and demonstratively kissing AIDS victims on the mouth.

Don't we know such public figures? Of course we do. The trouble with Kundera's Berck, thanks to the inconspicuous little word which started the passage I've just quoted, is not that he stands for all the opportunists and the limelight-seekers, it is that he stands for all people involved in humanitarian actions. The ridicule poured on him trickles down to the participants in a campaign in which, as Kundera describes it, "the children of Europe send rice for the children of Somalia." Again, is there not some element of absurdity about such actions? Of course there is. Why only children, and only for children? Why only Somalia? Why rice instead of real economic assistance? Isn't such philanthropy the easiest way to massage one's conscience? Isn't Kundera onto something?

These are all legitimate questions; and yet they are invalidated by the simple realization that, for all the ineffectuality, the self-deceit, the hubris, the shortsightedness, the moral ambiguity and the plain confusion involved in any humanitarian action, there may also be involved a simple, unequivocal and genuine impulse of human goodness. And the most gullible goodness is always better for the world than the most clear-sighted cynicism.

But the real reason that the figure of Berck is steeped in relentless, almost hateful ridicule (we are spared nothing, not even his bad breath) has as much to do with Kundera's aesthetics as with his ethics. His rationalistic, classicist, eighteenth-century leanings incline him to construct his novelistic world on a foundation of symmetry. He needs Berck as a foil and a catalyst for Cechoripsky. And the ridiculing of Cechoripsky, which serves, in this first novel written by Kundera in French, as the writer's sarcastic goodbye to the obsessions of contemporary Czech fiction, seems to be the chief reason why *Slowness* was written at all.

Berck and Cechoripsky meet at the chateau as guests of a grotesquely portrayed symposium of entomologists, the same event that young Vincent tries to interrupt by his laboriously staged sex. Berck, who has otherwise nothing to do with entomology, is supposed to honor the symposium with his presence as a famous human rights activist. Cechoripsky is an entomologist, but his presence at the symposium springs from causes no less extraneous: he has been invited as a way of honoring the plight of the Czech scientists who, like himself, had been deprived of their positions under the Husak regime and spent a couple of decades sweeping streets or cleaning windows.

Here the poverty of Kundera's imagination is most starkly revealed. All the farcical stereotypes known from countless earlier treatments of the East European dissident making his first trip to the West—from his sentimentally inflated (and soon to be thwarted) expectation of solidarity with his nation's plight down to his hopeless insistence on the correct spelling of his name or the sorry state of his teeth—are rehashed, to make Cechoripsky a thor-

LAW AND THE COMPANY WE KEEP

AVIAM SOIFER

Whether we are black, gay, Republican, women, or deaf, our associations—whether voluntary or assigned—constitute crucial and inescapable elements of our identities. Both voluntary and involuntary groups have been important in American history but these groups have never been adequately addressed by law, which has as its primary focus the relationship between the individual and the state. The company we keep, says the constitutional law scholar Aviam Soifer, is presumed to be each person's own business, and generally beyond notice of the law. But as America becomes a more varied country and issues arising out of multiculturalism threaten to divide us, it becomes essential, Soifer argues, to recognize rights under the First Amendment that will protect the crucial roles of groups and communities within the larger national community.

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oughly pathetic figure. His dissident past, in particular, becomes the central object of ridicule: first by being eulogized by Berck, in a grotesque improvised and ignorant speech in front of the television cameras, and then by the omniscient narrator himself, who finds his final satisfaction, and the ultimate outlet for his spite, in letting it be known that even Cechoripsky's dissident past was not authentic. Cechoripsky, you see, did not lose his job as a consequence of a genuine political commitment. He was punished, in fact, not for his courage, but for his lack of courage: he had yielded to social pressure and agreed to let some dissident acquaintances use a room in his institute for their clandestine meetings. Moreover, he secretly enjoyed the thoughtless existence of a manual laborer, and his return to the profession of scholarship under the new democratic dispensation does not really delight him at all.

Again, let us hear the devil's advocate. Is Cechoripsky really a fiction? Don't we know such cases? Weren't such people around? Don't most people's lives fall into the large area of moral ambiguity between the extremes of good and evil? Neither unequivocally noble nor unequivocally base, isn't a character such as Cechoripsky realistic and representative of human affairs? But the issue is not realism. Kundera is a writer, and he has every right in the world to linger over the improbable, the atypical, the unrealistic. It is not because Cechoripsky is inconceivable in real life that he is symptomatic of Kundera's artistic failure.

What the character of Cechoripsky establishes, rather, is the intensity with which Kundera is out to prove that nothing in this world can be authentic: no suffering, no compassion, no sacrifice, no courage, no thirst for freedom, no human kindness. All these words are just blaring music to which the "dancers" do their dance. And the sooner we realize this, the better prepared will we be to write literature as it should be written: unburdened by any external obligation, with "not a single serious word in it," all lightness and *opera buffa*, our smug and epicene and amoral way of slowing down and smelling the roses.

STANISLAW BARANCZAK is the Alfred Jurzykowski Professor of Polish Language and Literature at Harvard University.

Father Knows Best

BY MICHAEL SEAN WINTERS

Sin and Censorship: The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry by Frank Walsh

(Yale University Press, 394 pp., $35)

A little history is always helpful for the deflation of politicians. The increasingly rectitudinous campaign of 1996 is sure to swell with denunciations of Hollywood's moral depravity, and so Frank Walsh's history of the relationship between the Catholic Church and Hollywood comes when it is needed. American political and cultural debaters like to emphasize the newness of their claims, but in fact the V-chip of our day and the *Index of Forbidden Books* of an earlier day spring from the same moral source, which is the desire to protect our own from ideas or influences that will harm or confuse them. This perfectly understandable (though often quite coarse) moral concern is the natural product of an open society, where it inevitably collides with another moral concern, the claim of others not to be hindered in their freedom to choose and to show their art. Hence the issue of censorship, where two moralities clash.

Walsh has produced a dispassionate re-telling of how an earlier generation dealt with the problem. The most interesting thing to be learned from his account is that Hollywood solicited the Catholic Church as much as the Church sought to influence Hollywood. Needless to say, Hollywood's search for pastoral guidance was not exactly motivated by principle. In the 1920s, the Protestant press was calling for government censorship of the movies. Hollywood's bargain with the Catholic Church was that the producers would negotiate with them about the moral and religious content of films if the Church, in turn, would speak out against government censorship schemes. Catholic representatives

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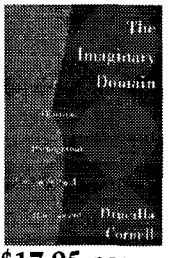

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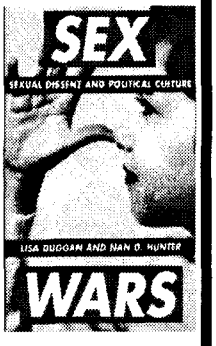

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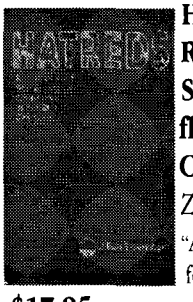

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dutifully testified against censorship bills before congressional and state legislative committees. American Catholics, conscious of their minority status, had always been hostile to the long arm of the government in areas that verged on morals, fearing that in a public forum their concerns and views would always rank second to those of their Protestant fellow citizens. The diffuse ecclesiastical structures of Protestantism made it easier for Hollywood to negotiate with the Catholic Church, which was perceived, incorrectly, as a monolithic organization run from the top down: if Hollywood procured the blessing of the bishops, surely the Catholic masses would flock to their neighborhood theaters. It was only a matter of time before Bing Crosby was crooning to *The Bells of St. Mary's*.

The two events that cemented the relationship between the studios and the Church were the adoption in 1930 of a Production Code and the founding of the Legion of Decency in 1934. The Code set down a list of do's and don'ts, such as the requirement that criminals end up punished, and that passion never be presented in such a way as to "stimulate the lower and baser elements." After four years of disillusionment over the Code, the Church succeeded in having Joseph I. Breen, a Catholic layman, named head of the Production Code Administration (PCA). Breen was a prudish man, but he was nonetheless in the pay of the movie industry, and the American Bishops Committee on the Motion Picture Industry decided to stiffen his nerve by founding the Legion of Decency. Throughout America, Catholics signed pledge cards at Mass. Curiously, Walsh does not quote the text of the pledge, but here it is:

> In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
>
> I promise to promote by word and deed what is morally and artistically good in motion picture entertainment.
>
> I promise to discourage indecent, immoral and unwholesome motion pictures especially by my good example and always in a responsible and civic-minded manner.
>
> I promise to guide those under my care and influence, in their choice of motion pictures that are morally and culturally inspiring.
>
> I promise not to cooperate by my patronage with theatres which regularly show objectionable films.
>
> I promise as a member of the Legion of Decency to acquaint myself with its aims, to consult with its classifications and to unite with all men of good will in promoting high and noble standards in motion picture entertainment.
>
> I freely make these solemn resolutions to the honor of God, for the good of my soul and for the welfare of my country. Amen.

The cards were signed in duplicate, with one copy going to the parishioner and the other collected by the pastor.

Over the next two decades, Breen and the Legion reviewers examined scripts, participated in filming and demanded changes in the final product with something close to autocratic authority. Thus, in *Gone with the Wind*, Melanie Wilkes gave birth in silhouette with only a bit of perspiration on her brow, and the morning after Rhett Butler had his way with Scarlett O'Hara, her post-coital pleasure scene was cut in half. When Twentieth-Century Fox signed Gypsy Rose Lee to star in *You Can't Have Everything* in 1937, Legion pressure forced the studio to make no reference to the burlesque queen's early career, and she was billed under her real name, Louise Hovick. In some instances there was no meeting of the minds, and the Legion condemned several films, including *Strange Cargo* and *Two-Faced Woman*, the former because its hero was a little too suggestive of Jesus Christ, the latter because Greta Garbo's neckline was too suggestive of something else. In both instances, the producers eventually altered some of the scenes and the Legion eventually approved the films for adult audiences.

The handling of Howard Hughes's *The Outlaw* was among the more complicated and comic adventures of Hollywood with the Church. When Breen rejected the film, because it gratuitously exploited Jane Russell's natural attributes, and had no redeeming artistic value, Hughes brought to the appeals board a mathematician who demonstrated conclusively that Russell exposed less of her bosom in *The Outlaw* than other starlets had in PCA-approved films. The appeals board granted a seal of approval, but several states that still had censorship boards refused to allow the film to be shown. When the Legion condemned the film in early 1943, Hughes withdrew it from circulation.

Three years later the film was rereleased, and its publicist exploited its earlier, sensational fate by advertising, "Not a scene cut," and "What are the TWO reasons for Jane's rise to stardom?" The ad campaign worked so well that the mediocre film was a box office smash, but the campaign also violated the producers' advertising code, and the

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PCA seal was withdrawn. According to Walsh, an estimated 85 percent of all theaters decided not to show the film. Hughes decided to talk to the Church. After a failed attempt to bribe a priest in Los Angeles, Hughes turned to Martin Quigley, a prominent Catholic layman and the editor of an industry magazine. Quigley suggested changes in the film: no longer could Billy tell Rio, "Hold still, lady, or you won't have much dress left," and a new ending left Sheriff Garrett victorious, rather than tied to a tree while the devious stars escape. In 1949, after some haggling with Hughes over their respective public statements, the Legion reclassified the film.

The movies became more explicit in the postwar era, and so did the Legion. Walsh correctly points out that the publication in 1947 of Alfred Kinsey's studies of Americans' sexual practices amply demonstrated the unreality of the Legion's idealistic worldview and emboldened producers to be more nuanced and more daring. The Legion introduced a more complicated rating system to ensure that adult audiences would not be limited to harmless trash, and to distinguish different types and levels of offensiveness. The changes allowed producers to take on more mature themes that might be suitable for adults but were still deemed inappropriate for children: divorce, a modicum of violence and even abortion began to make their way onto the screen with Legion approval, so long as all three were punished by the end of the film. This graying of the classification system took some of the pungency and the firmness out of the Legion's ratings. Sticking to its brief, the Legion refused to condemn films that were morally unobjectionable but had a leftist (read: communist) tilt, though they gave them a classification unto themselves.

The Miracle, an Italian film by Roberto Rossellini that appeared in 1950, featured a crazy peasant woman seduced by a stranger whom she is convinced is St. Joseph. She hears angels quoting scripture, her neighbors taunt her, and at the film's end she gives birth to (she believes) the baby Jesus. Rossellini's film was not subject to the negotiations conducted out of Breen's office, nor to the consultative processes developed between the Legion and the producers. Francis Cardinal Spellman condemned the film as "a vicious insult to Italian womanhood" and pressured the New York State Board of Censors—still in de jure operation, though it had not been called upon to exercise its fiat since the early 1930s—to condemn the film as "sacrilegious." The Supreme Court weighed in on May 26, 1952, overturning the ban on the film. With the law now seemingly on the side of the producers, the influence of the Legion was correspondingly diminished.

The liberalization of cultural norms and the loosening of legal restrictions would have ensured the decline of the Legion of Decency's influence in any case, but the proximate cause of the Legion's demise was an internal one. The producers had begun to realize what the Catholic Church had known all along and tried desperately to cover up: that the Church was not a monolith and, whatever the Legion said about a film, Catholics were making up their own minds about which films to see. (As a priest who is a friend of mine said to me, "My mother read the Legion's reviews, but God was not going to keep her from seeing Clark Gable.") As Catholics flocked to the suburbs, they lost not only their concentrated purchasing power at neighborhood theaters, they lost also many of their distinctive cultural links to the Church. And as the Legion became more sophisticated in its ratings scheme, right-wing clerics denounced them; James Cardinal McIntyre forbade the chief Legion reviewer, Father Patrick Sullivan, S.J., from visiting Los Angeles in an official capacity after Father Sullivan refused to condemn *La Dolce Vita* in 1960. As soon as the producers realized the Church spoke with many voices, the Legion was dead. Although the National Conference of Catholic Bishops still issues movie ratings, producers no longer quake at the prospect of their work being labeled "morally objectionable" by the Catholic Church.

Walsh's account of all this is itself not very censorious. He relates the facts without much in the way of context or criticism, save for a few swipes at the Legion in his introduction and his epilogue. He ably considers many ancillary matters, such as the anti-Semitism that motivated Joe Breen and others, but there is no central organizing theme to his book, beyond chronology. While the reader is told all about Breen and Father Sullivan and others, at the end of the book we know them very little. The men and women about whom Walsh writes make fascinating case studies in moral compromise. For moral seriousness generally does not reside in a life of purity. In real life, in real moral life, one must make adjustments, and reconcile conflicting claims, and—when conflicting claims cannot be reconciled—make a justifiable choice or a justifiable compromise. Something is

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lost in compromise, but sometimes the loss must be borne, because the alternatives are worse. On what grounds did the characters in Walsh's story make their choices and their compromises? What were the principles behind their adjustments? Walsh does not say.

A quick look at Walsh's footnotes shows the depth of his research—he has been through various and sundry Catholic archives—but a less quick look at those footnotes brought something interesting to my attention. In his text, Walsh refers to Archbishop of Baltimore Michael J. Curley's correspondence with a prominent layman in Detroit, Arthur Maguire, on whether to blacklist bad movies or to follow the procedures of the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae (IFCA) and only list the good movies, ignoring the bad ones. Curley was one of the most quotable Catholic prelates in American history, though he is usually overlooked, and I was delighted to see a historian consulting his correspondence. Walsh writes that "Maguire's inclination to blacklist objectionable films had been reinforced through his correspondence with Bishop Curley, who had told him that after a decade of the IFCA's whitelist, 'rotten movies were making money hand over fist.... If we 'boost the best,' " as the IFCA recommended, "we should damn the rest."

The word "Bishop" jars. All of Curley's correspondence was signed "Archbishop of Baltimore," which is not the same thing, as a historian of Catholic life should know. The letter that Walsh cites, of November 29, 1933, is assuredly signed that way; but that is not the worst of it. The letter also assuredly does not contain the words quoted by Walsh. Nor are they found in any of Curley's correspondence with Maguire. (I went to the archives in Baltimore and read through Curley's letters to Maguire.) The quote does reflect Curley's thinking; it even sounds like the blustery Archbishop himself. So the words may be his, but I couldn't find them where Walsh says they are.

Factual inaccuracy is only one of the cardinal sins of historical scholarship. Another is analytical dullness. The retelling of these facts begs certain hard and interesting questions; but the reader is given no respite from the minutiae. An example. Walsh uncritically endorses the line of criticism that the Legion wanted movies that presented the world not as it is, but as they wished it to be, with the result that movies endorsed by the Legion were unrealistic and, therefore, unartistic. Since when was realism the criterion of cinematic quality? It isn't likely, I agree, that many nuns will look like Ingrid Bergman, but how many people, eating breakfast at the local diner, experience John Travolta whipping out a gun and going nuts? Movies are fantasies, and fantasies come in many flavors. The Legion of Decency's concerns may have been prudish and even silly, but they were no more arbitrary to the making of art than are, say, the continuing financial concerns of the underwriters of the studios. Since its beginnings, Hollywood has been a business, not an art school, so there is something a little amusing and a little annoying about the protestations from the backlot about "artistic freedom."

Walsh considers none of this. He would have done well, moreover, to define what he means by censorship, which is a notoriously slippery term. Before the Legion of Decency, the IFCA compiled a whitelist of good movies, an exercise in what we might call "censorship." The films on the IFCA whitelists were indeed white. The aim was to persuade Catholics to see these films, and ignore the rest, so as not to call undue attention to the "filthy pictures." (The Vatican recently released a similar list of the greatest movies of all time.) But even though the Legion adopted the blacklist as well, was it really engaged in censorship? What is the difference between the Legion and a consumer rights' group? As a consequence of litigious consumers, after all, many manufacturers of many things in this free country also "censor themselves." Again, Walsh does not entertain such difficulties.

How should an open church function in an open society and an open culture? That is the most interesting question raised by this book, though it is not really addressed in it. The question is an old one. Colonial ministers noted the decline in morals among the second generation of New Englanders and warned that God's wrath could not be

Proust on Skates

He stayed in bed, and at the beginning of October still wasn't getting up till two in the afternoon. But he made a seventy-mile journey to Chamonix to join Albu [Louis Albufera] *and Louisa* [de Mornand, Albufera's beautiful mistress] *on a mule-back excursion to Montanvert, where they went skating.*

Ronald Hayman

The alpine forests, like huddled throngs of mourners,
Black, hooded, silent, resign themselves to wait
    As long as may be required;
A low pneumonia mist covers the glaciers,
Spruces are bathed in a cold sweat, the late
    Sun has long since expired,

Though barely risen, and the gray cast of the day
Is stark, unsentimental, and metallic.
    Earth-stained and chimney-soiled
Snow upon path and post is here to stay,
Foundered in endless twilight, a poor relic
    Of a once gladder world.

Sparse café patrons can observe a few
Skaters skimming the polished soapstone lake,
    A platform for their skill
At cross-cut, grape-vine, loop and curlicue,
Engelmann's Star, embroideries that partake
    Of talent, coaching, drill,

While a few tandem lovers, hand in hand,
Perform their *pas de deux* along the edges,
    Oblivious, unconcerned.
This is a stony, vapor-haunted land
Of granite dusk, of wind sieved by the hedges,
    Their branches braced and thorned.

Escaped from the city's politics and fribble,
Hither has come an odd party of three,
    Braided by silken ties:

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long in coming. At the outset of King Philip's War, in which one in every sixteen New England men of fighting age died, the Massachusetts General Court convened a ministerial committee to suggest moral reforms which were subsequently enacted into law, in 1675. God could not be counted on to deliver victories if His people did not deliver themselves of moral virtue. In his thanksgiving sermon after the defeat of King Philip the next year, Increase Mather pointed to the true source of the victory in arms: "From that day when there was a vote passed for the Suppression and Reformation of those manifest evils.... The Lord gave success to our Forces."

The defensive posture of the early Puritans was dictated by the hostility of their surroundings and their history of persecution. Although the wilderness was tamed soon enough, the moral fiber of colonial Americans, as seen by the clergy, was soon attacked by a more resilient enemy: the breaking asunder of cultural (and covenantal) bonds in the face of socioeconomic expansion and dislocation. Adam Smith trumped John Calvin. In American history, you can pick any decade and find the bonds of the religious community being intertwined with and overwhelmed by the acquisitiveness and the speed of the secular culture.

The defensive posture of Catholics in America derived partly from their immigrant origins: they entered a social and economic environment that was overtly hostile and a political culture that was deeply suspicious of Catholicism since its inception. (Remember, the Act of Toleration in 1688 did not extend to Catholics.) They lacked basic linguistic and labor skills, and they were desperately poor. In the late 1800s, a group of Catholic prelates led by James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, and Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul, became known as "Americanizers" for their advocacy of immigrant Catholics

With holiday abandon, the young couple
Have retreated into the deep privacy
    Of one another's eyes,

While the third, who in different ways yet loves them both,
Finds himself now, as usual, all alone,
    And lacing on his skates,
Steadies himself, cautiously issues forth
Into the midst of strangers and his own
    Interior debates.

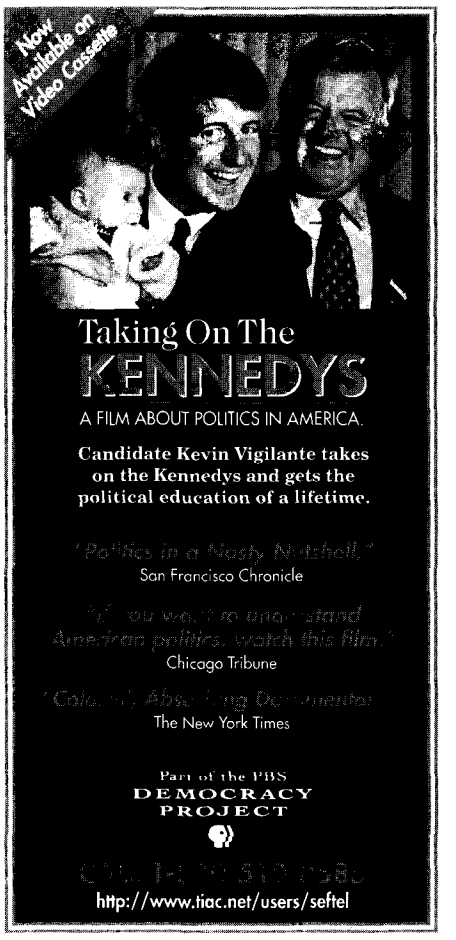
Sweatered and mufflered to protect the weak
And lacey branches of his bronchial tree
    From the fine-particled threat
Of the moist air, he curves in an oblique
And gentle gradient, floating swift and free—
    No *danseur noble*, and yet

He glides with a gaining confidence, inscribes
Tentative passages, thinks again, backtracks,
    Comes to a minute point,
Then wheels about in widening sweeps and lobes,
Large Palmer cursives and smooth *entrelacs*,
    Preoccupied, intent

On a subtle, long-drawn style and pliant script
Incised with twin steel blades and qualified
    Perfectly to express,
With arms flung wide or gloved hands firmly gripped
Behind his back, attentively, clear-eyed,
    A glancing happiness.

It will not last, that happiness; nothing lasts;
But will reduce in time to the clear brew
    Of simmering memory
Nourished by shadowy gardens, music, guests,
Childhood affections, and, of Delft, a view
    Steeped in a sip of tea.

ANTHONY HECHT



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embracing the mainstream of American culture. They de-emphasized the importance of parochial schools ("Long live the public schools," Archbishop Ireland famously said to a meeting of public school teachers, "withered be the hand raised against them.") These Catholics wrapped themselves in the flag whenever possible and even got themselves into trouble with the Vatican for praising the separation of church and state too wholeheartedly.

By the 1920s, the Americanizers were dead; and they were replaced by Roman-trained prelates who had imbibed the hostility of the late nineteenth-century Vatican to all things liberal or modern. The Catholic ghetto, originally imposed by circumstance, was affirmed on philosophical grounds, and the walls built higher. But to no avail. "Experience has shown that one hour spent in the darkened recesses of a movie picture theater will often undo years of careful training on the part of the school, the church, and the home," thundered Dennis Cardinal Dougherty, Archbishop of Philadelphia, on May 23, 1934, in a message read at all Masses in his archdiocese. The cardinal may have been cinematically challenged, but he properly understood the tenuousness of the Church's hold on its own. Despite the years of effort to fortify the walls of the Catholic ghetto—the construction of schools, parishes and neighborhoods, the founding of Catholic fraternal and social organizations, the maintenance of hundreds of local Catholic publications, often foreign-language publications—those walls were as matchsticks against the whirlwinds of American culture.

This defensiveness against the culture is one of the hallmarks of religion in American history, and it reflects a certain realism on the part of the clergy. Ministers and priests could rant and rail, but they knew the limits of their influence, and so they tried to reduce their religious expressions to moral expressions. This reduction of faith to moralism is obvious in the Legion of Decency's brief. It was apparent recently in the hostile reaction of many Catholics to *Priest*, a film which may have shown two priests engaged in sexual liaisons but was a profoundly Catholic film. (The traditional moralism of Irish Catholicism, which has been the dominant cultural influence on the American hierarchy since the 1840s, disposed many American Catholics to such a moralizing reductionism.) Still, it is important to understand that the defensiveness of Catholicism in America was not only a reaction against a hostile Protestant culture, but also an adoption of a distinctly American religious posture.

Buckle up. The story is not nearly over. Certainly the most interesting document to be passed recently by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) was a little-noticed statement issued last autumn on the subject of Hispanic Catholics and evangelization. By the year 2010, most Catholics in America will be of Hispanic origin. Hispanic Catholic immigrants encounter the same kinds of socioeconomic hostility as earlier immigrant groups, but they bring something different with them. They bring a culture that was born in the Church. The Hispanic Catholic—even the Mexican Catholic, whose mother country was ripped to shreds by wars between the state and the Church in this century—is fundamentally perplexed by the notion that religion must be defensive against the culture. For these new American Catholics, their religion is about much more than their morality.

And so it is no wonder that the Bishops' document, called "The Hispanic Presence in the New Evangelization in the United States," is not shy in presenting its criticism of American culture: "In our country, the modern, technological, functional mentality creates a world of replaceable individuals incapable of authentic solidarity. In its place, society is grouped by artificial arrangements created by powerful interests. The common ground is an increasingly dull, sterile consumer conformism, so visible especially among too many of our young people, created by artificial needs promoted by the advertising media to support powerful economic interests."

This highly undefensive criticism was earlier unleashed by the principal author of the Bishops' letter, Monsignor Lorenzo Albacete, the newly named president of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico. In an article in the Catholic quarterly *Communio*, Albacete was equally withering in his view of mainstream American Catholicism. "It is a great temptation for the Church," he wrote, "to reduce its mission to that of an ethical authority in order to gain access to the public forum." (He could have used the Legion of Decency as Exhibit A.) This, he claimed, can be, "a Machiavellian deception which holds that anything can be tolerated as long as the institution is preserved since, without it, the mission cannot be accomplished." In the world of ecclesiastical pleasantries, those are fighting words.

The Bishops' document stated the problem and proposed a solution: "The New Evangelization is intended to bridge the gap between faith and culture by showing that a faith that does not generate culture is a sterile faith." Not since the first generation of Puritans set out to build their "city upon a hill," perhaps, has such a project as "generating culture" been undertaken by any religion in American history. In the days of Pat Buchanan, this may sound alarming. But what the Bishops are suggesting is nothing strident. They have in mind not a cultural war, but something more provocative and more profound: a renaissance of their own faith in their own cultural circumstances. It appears that the Catholic Church in America will be less concerned with the appointment of Catholic censors and more concerned with the cultivation of Catholic producers and directors. The dominant Hispanic presence in the Church of the next century will not seek to lead its members into a ghetto; it will lead them directly into American culture, acting on their rights as citizens, and hoping to illustrate to their fellow citizens the sweet truth that they profess. Sweetness, too, comes in many flavors, and someday we may have our own *La Dolce Vita*.

MICHAEL SEAN WINTERS is a doctoral candidate in Church History at the Catholic University of America.

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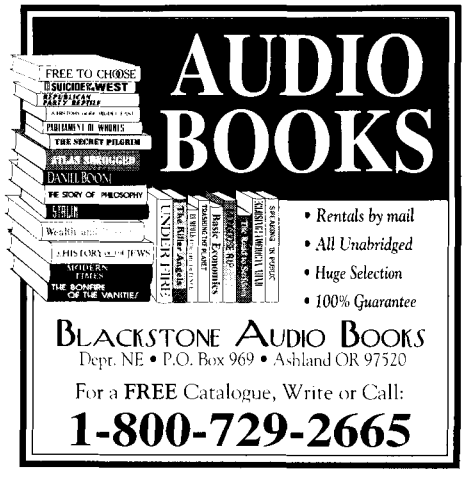

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TRB *continued from page 4*

as much in a little noticed proposal last year). Then scrap a third of the $300 billion in subsidies now going yearly to big companies and to Americans earning more than $50,000 (saving another 1.5 percent of GDP).

Next, there's health care. It now consumes a stunning 15 percent of GDP, up from 6 percent in 1960. Yet today's most aggressive "cost control" plans would simply hold its rise to 18 rather than 20 percent of GDP early in the next century. Instead, let's take 3 percent of GDP out of health care and hold it there. Impossible? We're the only advanced country that thinks so. A 12 percent of GDP target means rolling back health costs to their share of national income in 1990, when we still spent more than twice as much per person as other countries, with worse public health results.

Finally, we'll have to scrap Bob Dole's big tax cut in favor of a 5 percent of GDP across-the-board cut in current consumption by Americans who aren't poor. Accomplishing this partly through a mandatory savings plan that moves us toward personally controlled, pre-funded Social Security accounts could supply the savings we need to boost private investment, even as it puts the next generation's retirement on a sounder footing.

Yes, I know, there are a few tax and budget details to iron out, and a lot of bully pulpit work to boot. But look what you get: safe streets, schools that work and technology-led growth; everyone at work who's able, at a living wage with health care, in cities that gleam. If it's hard to imagine our political culture even considering a "10 percent solution," that's because powerful interest groups have a stake in keeping GDP allocated the way it is today. We're doomed to symbolic posturing rather than serious reform because right now our political system says our most important priorities are that: doctors here earn much more than in other countries; we keep hundreds of half-empty hospitals open; we spend more on defense than the next fifteen nations combined; we give rich people and big companies zillions in aid; and so on.

Herbert Stein, whose 1989 book, *Governing the $5 Trillion Economy*, urged the "budgeting GDP" idea as a guide to policy, says it best: "America is a rich country. We are not rich enough to do everything, but we are rich enough to do everything important." So when both parties' bromides leave you empty this year, take heart. Once we're serious, salvation is just a dime on the dollar away.

MATTHEW MILLER

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 7*

Mail fraud

To the editors:

I generally do not feel compelled to write to magazines or newspapers, but the recent barrage of hate mail received by your publication has done just that (Correspondence, August 19 & 26). I am a Muslim and am shocked at the atrocities perpetrated by half-witted zealots in the name of religion. Or perhaps I unjustly name these acts "atrocities"; the dimwit who left that oh-so-Islamic message on your voice-mail evidently thought that it would have met with the Prophet's approval; the same goes for those rabid letter-writers who have succeeded in parading only their bigotry, not their piety. One hundred and thirteen of the Koran's one hundred and fourteen chapters begin with "In the Name of God, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful," a point that seems to have been lost on these hate-mongers. I would greatly appreciate your not disclosing my e-mail address—as you can imagine, I would receive little joy (and would be inconvenienced to no mean degree) at being inundated by a flood of filth written by intellectual midgets who seem to be completely divorced from the true spirit of religion.

MUHAMMAD UMAIR AHMED
Via the Internet

Throwing a line

To the editors:

Paul J. Tanenbaum (Correspondence, September 2) is incorrect on both grounds in his criticism of Richard Posner. If you sever a material "line" the ends are indistinct because of quantum mechanical effects as well as the electrical field at each end; and, as far as a mathematical line is concerned, the concept of the Dedekind section (which permits you to define a set of all numbers less than a certain number) is at the center of a great controversy in mathematics. That is, there is a dichotomy between those who believe the Dedekind section is legitimate and those who believe it should be regarded as another axiom. Oh well, Posner doesn't need my help.

CHARLES KELBER
Rockville, Maryland

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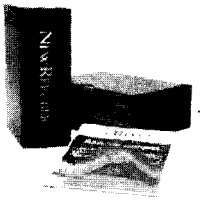

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SARAJEVO DIARIST

Bite the ballot

AS EVERY CHILD HERE KNOWS, VOTing in Bosnia and Herzegovina is scheduled to take place on September 14 because it is part of an electoral agenda. President Clinton's electoral agenda, that is. The Bosnian elections, even if they're unfree and unfair, are to serve as this administration's foreign policy triumph. So, although none of the requisite conditions for a fair ballot—freedom of movement, freedom of expression, freedom of association, a politically neutral environment—has been met, U.S. diplomat Robert Frowick, who heads the Bosnian mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which is overseeing the elections, is pressing forward with the vote. He conceded only: "We had to bite the bullet and make that decision in June, and I don't think it's going to be revisited unless there is a major outbreak of violence." Given the brutality so far—pummelings, stonings, deaths in police custody, etc. (see "Run for Your Lives," p. 16)—one wonders just how "major" the violence has to be.

SECRETARY OF STATE WARREN Christopher recently said the Bosnian elections cannot "be judged by the standards of, say, northern Europe." The opinion polls around here aren't up to northern European standards, either. The best one I've come across: "Of 163 residents of Vranje [a small Serbian town] aged between 16 and 72, 41.24 percent would not throw a lifebelt to President Slobodan Milosevic if they saw him in danger of drowning." Other findings: 15 percent of the respondents would watch Milosevic and five other Serbian politicians drown without moving a finger. Asked to name a politician with whom they'd like to vacation on a desert island, 26.15 percent of respondents said they'd rather go alone, and 5 percent said they'd like to share the island with Mira Markovic, Milosevic's wife. A town of mavericks, this little Vranje.

SINCE IT'S THE U.S. ELECTIONS that have spurred the drive for Bosnian elections, it's not surprising that the U.S. Information Agency has carried out the only polls about the election published here. Even less surprising, these polls show that "Bosnian Muslims" (as USIA calls Bosniaks) profess almost total faith in the elections: 96 percent believe they'll be able to vote for the party of their choice without fear of intimidation. Another USIA poll reports 80 percent of Bosniaks believe the elections will be free and fair. Since I'm now officially a "political analyst" working for the International Crisis Group, I checked the numbers with an expert, Professor Muhamed Nuhic from the faculty of Political Sciences at the Sarajevo University, who has conducted his own survey. Nuhic told me unequivocally the USIA numbers are absurdly high. But he declined to give me exact data, since his own poll was conducted on behalf of the OSCE.

IT'S TRUE THAT many here in Bosnia want these unfree and unfair elections to proceed anyway. After four years of deceit, broken promises and half-hearted commitments from the international community, Bosniaks realize the elections are the only part of the Dayton Agreement the outside world is determined to carry out. So they seize the opportunity, fearing even this one may be short-lived. Bosnians do not dare to be picky. This election is the only thing that's been offered—so they take it. Still, after living in Bosnia for the last four months, in Mostar, Banja Luka and Sarajevo, i.e. among the three main ethnic groups, and speaking the language rather fluently, if ungrammatically, I have my own evidence, admittedly anecdotal, to doubt the alleged enthusiasm for the September vote.

ONE SCENE I SAW IN A SARAJEVO street: a U.S. soldier was putting up a poster produced by the NATO implementation force. Underneath a big title, "WHAT IF," were some photographs and questions: "WHAT IF I WANT TO SEE MY GRANDCHILD?" "WHAT IF I NEED TO GO TO A DOCTOR?" "WHAT IF I CANNOT VOTE?" At the bottom was written, "THE ANSWER IS: FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT." Another soldier was conducting a mini-poll to see the man-in-the-street's reaction to this poster. Every person who bothered to answer the soldier's questions had a long stream of complaints. But since the soldier knew so little of the local language, after he asked, "Do you like this poster?" he had no clue what the nervous citizens were answering. Two Sarajevans I watched dismissed him with a wave of the hand, saying "OK, OK," and turning away. With my innate discretion, I peeked into the soldier's pad: sixteen "yes" replies, zero "nay." It dawned on me: every "OK," no matter how dismissive, was entered as a "yes." Succumbing to the agent provocateur in me, I translated a longer complaint by an old woman who was shouting about being unable to visit her former neighbors; her tirade became the soldier's first "nay." But I had other things to do that day and had to move on. Eight more OKs and he would reach 96 percent.

MY COLLEAGUE BARBARA DEMICK had an American serviceman explain to her that, in a cartoon for children about a brave Captain Mir (Captain Peace), the captain is wearing a mask so children can't see whether he's a Serb, a Croat or a Bosniak. When Barbara told the soldier there's no way to differentiate the three ethnic groups by their looks (she knows, she just wrote a book about Sarajevo), he sneered. "C'mon, Madam, I didn't arrive here yesterday. I know how to tell them apart."

TO DETERMINE WHICH PART OF Bosnia and Herzegovina one is in, look at the telltale license plates: yellow fleurs-de-lys on a blue background mark Bosniak plates; a red-and-white checkerboard denotes Bosnian Croat tags; Cyrillic text signals Republika Srpska, or Bosnian Serb, plates. It is almost 100 percent mix-proof. To determine where a person without a car lives, ask for his or her telephone number. All ex-Yugoslavs have 38 at the beginning of their numbers, but the next digit is critical: 1 means Republika Srpska, 7 the Bosniak-Croat federation. The only way to telephone a 7-area code from a 1-area code is, believe it or not, to route the call through Seattle. Some freedom of communication.

CURRENCY ALSO DISTINGUISHES Bosniaks and Croats. Although both accept German marks, Croats also trade in kuna issued by Zagreb, Bosniaks in Bosnian dinars from Sarajevo. It's no laughing matter. In May I met a Croat hospitalized after a beating he suffered in East (Bosniak-dominated) Mostar when he tried to pay for his coffee there in kunas. Later, I listened to a Bosniak who was stripped naked in West (Croat-dominated) Mostar for trying to pay a fine in Bosnian dinars. Of course, neither Bosniaks nor Croats accept the rump Yugoslavia's dinars produced by Belgrade—the only currency that circulates in Republika Srpska. Does Warren Christopher realize how lucky he was to escape unharmed from the grocery store in Sarajevo's old town where, on a recent shopping spree, he paid for that spontaneous bag of grapes in Republika Srpska's dinars?

ANNA HUSARSKA

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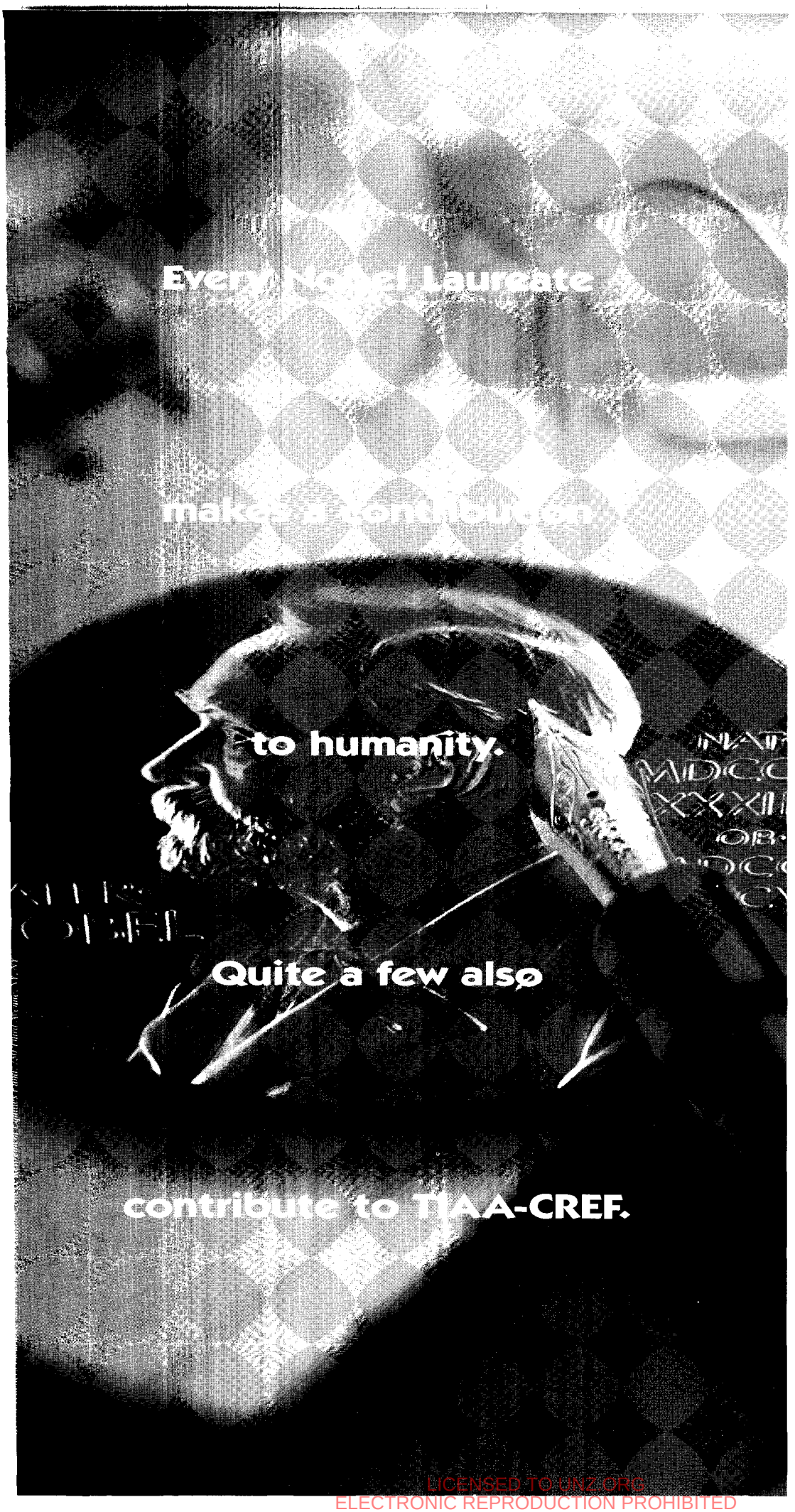

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